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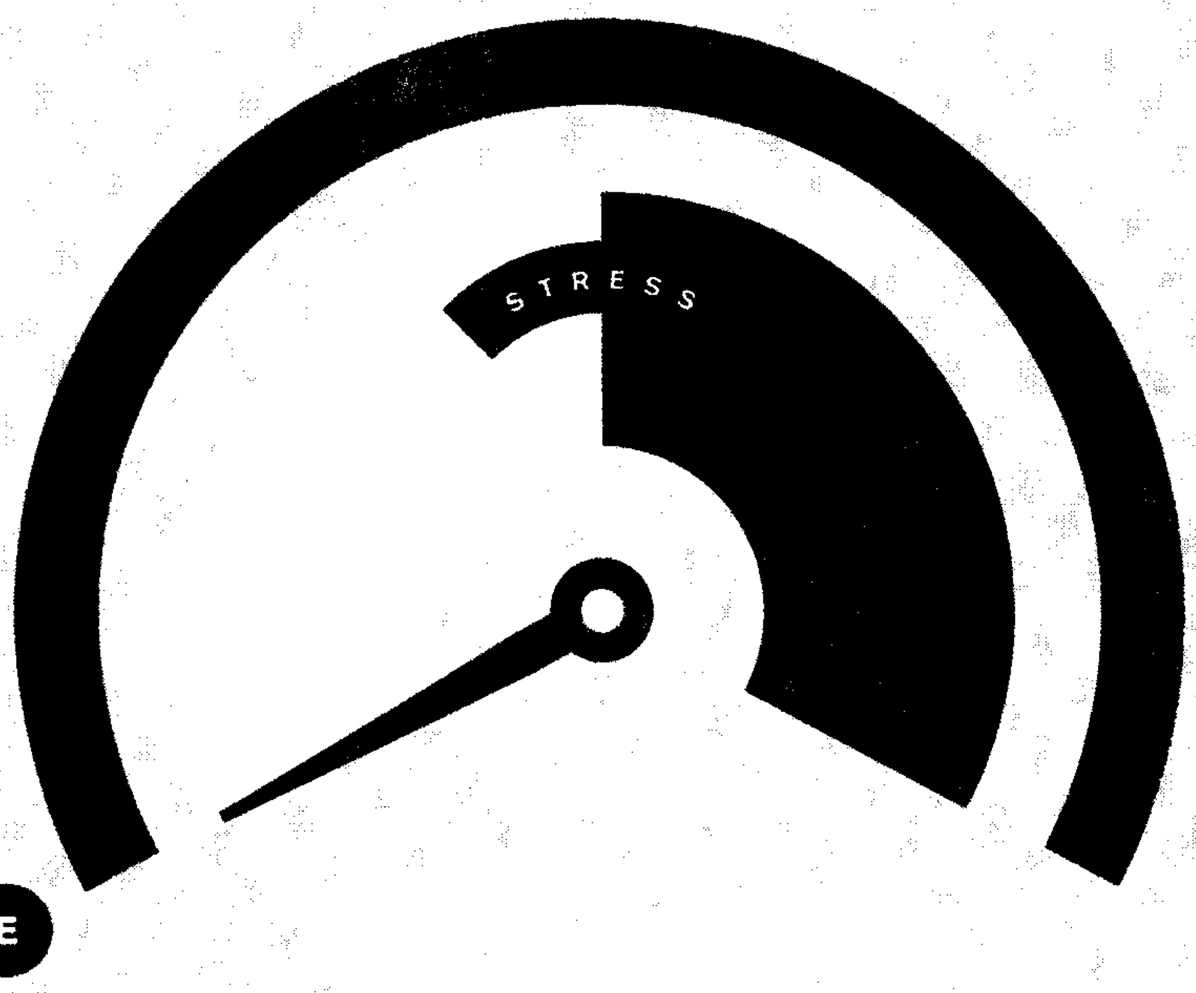

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In order to make sure that in future correct procedures are observed, my staff will now be required to attend compulsory "Trust and Truth" weekend seminars where they will be instructed in how to avoid being found out when they have rigged the results of their quizzes.

I hope this will do much to restore the public's confidence in my organisation.

E. Strobes
pp Lord Gnome
White Lie City
London W94.

GNOME SUMMER QUIZ

● Do you believe a word Lord Gnome says? Let us know by phone or text. You can win a video of the Queen allegedly storming out of the photo session with world-famous photographer Annie Slaggovitz.

Forget the Alastair Campbell Diaries – THIS is the inside story!

The final ST ALBION PARISH NEWS – So Long, Vicar! Available exclusively from Private Eye. See pages 31 and 35.

EDITORIAL
6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN.
Tel: 020 7437 4017. Fax: 020 7437 0705.
Email: strobes@private-eye.co.uk
Website: www.private-eye.co.uk

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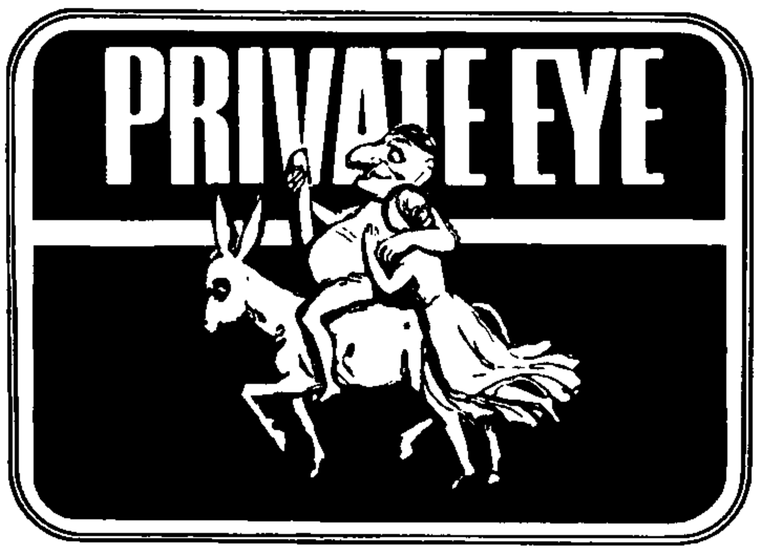

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TO HAVE one rail-infrastructure body go bust on you may be regarded as a misfortune; to have two go bust looks like carelessness. But Gordon Brown looks worse than careless.

As chancellor he failed to stop Railtrack going into a meltdown that's costing billions to fix, and *after* Railtrack collapsed he begat a son of Railtrack for the London tube. So there were feelings of *déjà vu* two weeks ago when Metronet, which grabbed most of the London Underground PPP (public private partnership) went into administration. Even the company handling the administration, Ernst & Young, was the same as for Railtrack.

When he was newly elected, London mayor Ken Livingstone opposed PPP but Brown ensured control of the tube was withheld from him until the deals were signed. Taxpayers spent more than £182m on consultants and advisers for PPP. Other costs included paying bidders £275m for bidding. These sums may look a bit high considering Metronet lasted just four years.

The City was wary after Railtrack, so the government sweetened the pill by increasing to 95 percent the proportion of PPP debt the state would cover "in the event of termination". So taxpayers are now saddled with all but 5 percent of Metronet's debt, said to be £2bn.

In 2005 the Commons public accounts committee said that, despite the government guaranteeing 95 percent of the debt, the cost of borrowing was £450m higher for PPPs than if the state had borrowed the same amount itself. David Rowlands, permanent secretary at the Department of Transport (knighted last year), told the committee the government "was prepared as a matter of policy to accept the inherently higher financing costs".

Gordon Brown's PPP folly has clobbered taxpayers with staggering costs and delayed tube modernisation. How bizarre that some people regard him as an intellectual heavyweight who is prudent with money.

● *See Tubular balls-up, p26.*

Despite complaints about "Gestapo-like" tactics pursued by police investigating the cash-for-honours affair, it seems that the trio arrested by Inspector Knacker – Lord Levy, Ruth Turner and Sir Christopher Evans – may have been treated more favourably than most suspected villains.

For the past three years police have routinely taken DNA samples from people they arrest and added them to the national database, even if they are completely innocent. When the *Eye* phoned Scotland Yard to confirm that the cash-for-honours trio had indeed been treated like most other suspects, a spokeswoman said: "Taking DNA does not happen in every case."

We also asked Lord Levy's office, Tony's Blair new office (where Ms Turner now works), and Sir Christopher's office at his Merlin Biosciences company. Reply came there none.

TWO years ago, as leader of Kent county council, Sir Sandy Bruce-Lockhart signed a secret concordat with Ashford borough council and Imperial College London.

The furtive scheme was to despoil and develop large tracts of the 840 acres owned by Imperial at Wye, which it had inherited from Wye Agricultural College on a merger in 2000 – even though every inch of the land was officially designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB).

Local outrage ensued, and the deal finally collapsed last September after an awesomely energetic and effective campaign by Wye residents.

This week, Lord Bruce-Lockhart (as he now is) started work in a new job – as chairman of English Heritage, which exists "to protect and promote England's spectacular historic environment". Shome mishtake, shurely?

HALLELUJAH! Barbara Thomas Judge, the Eva Peron lookalike who chairs the UK Atomic Energy Authority, has yet another job – her 31st, by our calculations.

This one is as a director of Bekaert, the Belgian engineering firm. She already sits on the board of more than 20 UK companies and institutions (including several large plcs) along with another nine abroad – in the US, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Turkey and now Belgium.

The question of how she can look after the safety of the five clapped-out power stations in UKAEA while shouldering so many other responsibilities becomes ever more puzzling. During a recent parliamentary debate on the subject, Labour minister Jim Fitzpatrick added to the mystery by insisting that: "We probably get twice as much of her time as we pay for." Since the atomic kitten officially works a two-day week at the UKAEA (in return for a £60,000 salary), this suggests she actually devotes four days a week to it.

How then, in the remaining time, does she do justice to all her other commitments?

THE flaws in the planned night-time closure of Windsor fire station (see last *Eye*) were quickly revealed as the Thames flooded in the early hours of 20 July.

Indeed, while the Windsor crews were out dealing with one flood, a desperate householder banged on the station doors asking for help nearby.

An off-duty fire-fighter who was at the station called Control only to be told there were "no available appliances" to help. So much for neighbouring fire stations being able to cover Windsor at night.

"Have you considered performance-enhancing drugs?"

Street Of Shame

PANIC stations at the *Daily Mail*: only a few weeks after his last absence, editor Paul Dacre is back on sick leave. It seems the pills for his dodgy ticker are playing havoc with his kidneys.

In his absence, Dacre's ambitious Mini-Me lieutenants are performing their traditional rituals: jockeying for position as heir designate while desperately second-guessing the great man's whims and fancies. The fear in W8 is that this time the ailing editor really will have to retire soon – leaving the place as rudderless and warring as a Saturday night in downtown Basra.

EMBARRASSMENT ahoy at the *Grauniad* over a G2 cover-story on 2 July about Russian billionaires, written by Moscow correspondent Luke Harding. It bore a startling resemblance to a piece published almost two months earlier by *the eXile*, an English-language magazine in Moscow.

"Of the seven oligarchs who controlled 50 per cent of Russia's economy during the 1990s," Harding noted, "six were Jewish: Berezovsky, Vladimir Guzinsky, Alexander Smolensky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Mikhail Friedman and Valery Malkin." Or, as Mark Ames and Yasha Levine had put it in *the eXile* on 18 May: "Of the seven oligarchs who controlled more than 50 per cent of Russia's economy during the 1990s, six were Jews: Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Guzinsky, Alexander Smolensky, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Mikhail Friedman and Vitaly Malkin."

Ames and Levine had explained in *the eXile* that this wasn't because of a Jewish conspiracy: "In the Soviet Union, Jews were restricted in their ability to assimilate and rise up in society, so those who wanted to get ahead were forced into the margins. That meant that while ethnic Slavs dominated all the best career slots in the highly bureaucratised Soviet society, Jews dominated the black market economy."

Harding couldn't have put it better himself. "The Soviet Union restricted Jews' ability to assimilate and rise up in society," he told *Grauniad* readers. "While ethnic Slavs dominated all the best career slots in the highly bureaucratised official society, Jews who wanted to get ahead were forced into the black market economy..."

And so, painfully, on.

Peeved at this shameless larceny, the editors of *the eXile* invoiced the *Grauniad* for "reprinting" their article under Harding's name. The paper declined to pay but, under pressure, has agreed that ombudswoman Siobhan Butterworth will conduct an inquiry. Can her conclusion be in doubt?

Number crunching

£20m ■ Heather Mills-McCartney's divorce payout, according to *Telegraph*

£30m ■ Heather Mills-McCartney's divorce payout, according to *Sun*

£50m ■ Heather Mills-McCartney's divorce payout, according to *Express*

£70m ■ Heather Mills-McCartney's divorce payout, according to *Mail*

JUST FANCY THAT!

"BEST FOR SMALL FAMILIES: GLOUCESTER... There is a high degree of new housing near the docks and on the city edges. There is a pleasing maritime feel to the place."

– "New Hotspots", Independent Property Section, 18 July

SOME children in the stalls of the Adelphi Theatre got more than they bargained for at the opening night of *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

When a technical hitch interrupted the show in the first half, the *Evening Standard*'s notoriously tetchy theatre critic, Nicholas de Jongh, decided he would stretch his legs. He started to walk up the aisle; but his regal process was barred by a thickset man in a suit who politely asked him to return to his seat because the performance was about to continue.

There was a second or two's silence and then the elderly hack, without a thought for the youngsters around him, screeched: "But I'm a FUCKING THEATRE CRITIC!" The thickset man growled back: "Yeah, and I'm security."

De Jongh realised he had met his match and meekly returned to his seat, thus concluding one of the evening's more entertaining scenes.

THE case of hypnotist Paul McKenna and the dodgy degree was back in court this month when Dr McKenna sought his legal costs against the *Daily Mirror* over its story that the PhD he had obtained from an obscure university, whose principal was subsequently jailed for fraud, was bogus.

A year ago Mr Justice Eady ruled that the learned doctor had been libeled, the degree was not bogus and that he was in principle entitled to most of his costs. McKenna was now demanding that the *Mirror* should pay all his costs on a penal basis as, he claimed, the *Mirror* had refused reasonable offers of settlement.

On this occasion McKenna was not in court but left it to his lawyers to argue the toss. Unfortunately for McKenna their own hypnotic powers of persuasion were found wanting. The judge threw out McKenna's plea and instead deprived him of a significant amount of his costs – a decision which it is estimated will cost him at least £250,000 – due to his conduct during the case, which included being evasive, misleading and obstructive about how he obtained his degree.

DANIEL JEFFREYS, the *Indie*'s Seoul correspondent, had a corking two-page story on 13 July about a scandal "reminiscent of a Patricia Highsmith novel": the high-flying young curator of a top South Korean art museum had been revealed as a conwoman who embellished her CV with imaginary honours and qualifications.

"It's always puzzling when a person who has sought high profile positions in prominent professions is shown to be a fraud," he observed, adding that the woman was now buried "beneath the rubble of her own fanciful dreams and aspirations".

Jeffreys knows a thing or two about being fanciful. In 2002, as US correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, he filed an exclusive eye-witness account of the execution of British-born Tracy Housel in a Georgia prison. Billed as "the only British reporter at the execution", he revealed that "I watched through a glass screen in the neighbouring room. What happened will haunt my dreams and reshape them into nightmares for years."

In fact he had seen nothing: he was in the car park with the rest of the hacks, relying on the accounts of witnesses as they emerged. Shortly afterwards *Daily Mail* editor Paul Dacre indeed reshaped Jeffreys's dream into a nightmare – by firing him.

THE *Independent* made much of the fact that Tony Blair had had three phone conversations with Rupert Murdoch in March 2003 in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.

"The war was strongly supported by Murdoch-owned newspapers around the world. The day after two of the calls, the *Sun* launched vitriolic attacks on the French President Jacques Chirac." After the third phone call, the *Indy* noted, the *Sun* had commended "the courage and resilience of Tony Blair and George Bush".

Full marks for spotting this connection only a year after it was first made in *Eye* 1163. But if the *Indy* believes that media magnates shouldn't be able to exert any influence over their editors or politicians, it is a surprise that it has never turned its attention to the Republic of Ireland, where successive political leaders have tried to curry favour with Sir Tony O'Reilly, owner of the three of the country's biggest-selling newspapers.

In the run-up to this year's general election, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and his finance minister had a private meeting with O'Reilly. All three titles went on to endorse Ahern and his party, which were returned to office. In addition to his Irish newspaper holdings, O'Reilly also happens to be the proprietor of, er, the *Independent*.

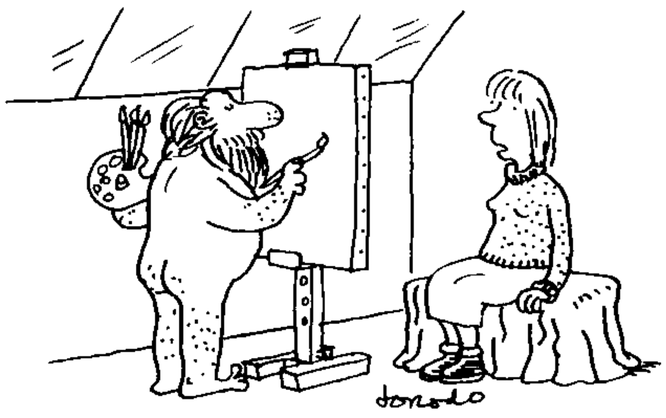
PS: In 2001, after lobbying from O'Reilly's advisers, Ahern's government changed a tax law which benefited his consortium's takeover of telecoms firm Eircom. The following year, O'Reilly's flagship newspaper the *Irish Independent* duly backed Ahern in another general election.

LORD Gnome's Polly Filler award for July goes to Lucy Cavendish, who wrote in last week's *Evening Standard* about being a working mum while her hubby looked after the children.

"While Michael was playing househusband, I was constantly running out to interview people for this newspaper then coming back to find I had to pick up the pieces at home. At the same time I was writing my second novel and publicising my first."

Cavendish attributed this predicament to the fact that "a year ago, my husband Michael told me he wanted to give up his job as graphics editor in London and stay at home to look after our children." This claim has provoked bafflement at the *Observer*, where staff were under the impression that her other half, Michael Agar, had been working for them for the last 12 months. Agar was last seen enjoying himself in the early hours at his leaving do at the paper's local pub, the Coach and Horses, only last month.

PS: Cavendish also forgot to mention that amid her onerous schedule she still found time to slip away to sunnier climes on various press junkets for the British Airways in-flight magazine, *High Life*.



"Shouldn't I be the one who's nude?"

Number crunchings

0 ■ Words written by the Sun (prop. R Murdoch) revealing that Sky News (prop. R Murdoch) had faked a TV report of a "live" missile launch on board a Royal Navy submarine in 2003.

2112 ■ Words written by the Sun after the BBC was found to have edited a programme trailer to make it look as if the Queen had stormed out of a photo session.

***WALL STREET Journal* hacks who wonder what a Murdoch-owned future is like might consider the fate of the *Times*'s veteran foreign correspondent John Phillips. An Italian court has ordered the Dirty Digger to pay him the best part of €500,000 for illegally dismissing him in 2004.**

Phillips had worked for the paper since 1990, as a Paris correspondent and then in Italy, as well as risking his arse in the Croatian and Bosnian wars. None of this counted for much, however, when the *Times* decided to trim its sails in 2004. The foreign news editor called Phillips's mobile and told him: "I am going to axe you. I have been asked to make budget cuts and you are our most expensive freelance." As a result Phillips, 48, his wife and their two daughters were evicted from their home in Rome.

The newspaper's defence in court was to claim that Phillips was a pure freelance rather than a correspondent and could therefore be arbitrarily told to sod off over the phone.

Former managing editor George Brock surprised the judge by saying he couldn't remember if Phillips had attended a conference for European correspondents organised by then-editor Peter Stothard at the Reform club, even though he sat next to Phillips. Despite Brock's memory lapse, the court accepted that Phillips had indeed been there – and that the *Times* did regard him as one of its correspondents.

As well as covering his back pay and benefits, the *Times* is obliged to reinstate him. But despite the court's findings, it seems reluctant to cough up. After the judgment, in June, Phillips's lawyers requested payment within 10 days but had no response. They are now preparing an injunction for payment in the high court in London. Anoushka Healy, a *Times* spokeswoman, told the *Eye*: "The gentleman in question, John Philips, was a stringer for the *Times* in Italy. He was not the *Times* correspondent." Clearly the Dirty Digger has no more respect for the Italian courts than he has for his hacks.

"Hi, I'm on the rain"

HACKWATCH

Fleet Street Fakers

"THE BBC is truthful, or it is nothing," opined the *Telegraph*, reeling from the catalogue of faked phone-ins and editorial juggling acts 'fessed up to by the corporation's director-general.

"It is staggering that the programme's makers believed they could get away with inventing a sequence involving the head of the British state. But they did. It gives a disturbing indication of what they are prepared to do when ordinary people are their victims."

Many *Telegraph* readers were also staggered by the paper's front-page report on the execution of the former Iraqi head of state on 30 December last year, which got a number of details wrong, largely because, as hack Toby Harnden subsequently admitted, he was "writing about Saddam's hanging before it happened" – indeed, a full nine hours before the timeline "3am" which the paper printed prominently next to his story. Harnden's excuse? "It was one of those tricky journalistic challenges when no matter how much you hedge and speculate, the reality will always mischievously diverge from the finely turned piece one filed."

And the *Telegraph*'s take on the BBC affair? "Surely it should be obvious to any employee of a nationally subsidised, world-class broadcasting organisation that deceiving the public in the manner of a tawdry, fly-by-night showman is not acceptable."

"THE BBC has played fast and loose with the truth, for no nobler reason than to make a greater impact or produce a slicker programme," snorted the *Daily Mail* over what it called "The Shaming of the BBC."

In the past few months the *Mail* and its sister paper the *Mail on Sunday* have had to apologise for falsely claiming Coleen McLoughlin had been snubbed by a number of celebrities who hadn't actually been invited to her birthday party; saying Cherie Blair behaved in a "regal manner" during the filming of a documentary; implying actor Jimmy Nail had an inappropriate relationship with a younger actress; claiming former TV presenter Mike Hollingsworth hit his ex-partner; suggesting that actress Keira Knightley contributed to the death of a young anorexic she had never met; claiming newsreader Jon Snow had a lengthy affair with a woman he does not know; accusing a Birmingham businessman of being a terrorist; and a *Newsnight* producer of being a stalker.

The *Mail* and *Mail on Sunday* have also played fast and loose with readers in the small matter of promotions. The Advertising Standards Agency has upheld no fewer than 15 separate complaints in the past five years against promotions and competitions that fell foul of ASA's codes on Truthfulness, Misleading Advertising, Accurate Pricing and Front-page flashes.

"FOR BBC read – Britain's Biggest Cheats," thundered the *Daily Star*. "They have rigged competitions and conned cash out of viewers from dodgy premium-rate phonelines. And they have been caught out telling insulting lies about the Queen. This once-great institution has been operating with about as much honesty as the Mafia."

Quite a claim from the paper which, as the *Eye* has revealed, ran £1.50-a-minute phone competitions to win vehicles so dilapidated they have moss growing on them, whose sister publication runs regular stories claiming members the Royal Family plotted to murder Diana, and whose proprietor Richard Desmond was named as a business associate two years ago in the trial of real-life Mafioso Richard "Richie from the Bronx" Martino.

"THE *Daily Mirror* remains a strong supporter of the BBC, unlike media organisations driven by commercial rivalries," the paper declared in an editorial on the day it exposed what it called "Lie TV from the BBC". Nevertheless, "the BBC has its work cut out to build back trust".

Perhaps as a pal the newspaper could offer some advice from the recent occasion when it had to sack its own editor and print a front-page apology after insisting for a fortnight that its fake photos of British troops abusing Iraqi prisoners were genuine.

THE bogus phone-in competitions were a "scandal" and a "fiasco" according to the *Express*.

Takes one to know one. Among the *Express*'s front-page reader bonanzas of late have been, for example, the "Free concert tickets for every reader" that were neither free nor for every reader (*Eye* 1047). And in what some might term a "phone-in scandal", the *Express* charges all incoming callers at premium rate.

THE BBC's "reputation for truth, impartiality and honesty is shot to pieces", intoned the *Sun*'s political editor George Pascoe-Watson.

Thank goodness, then, for Sky. While BBC chiefs "blow a staggering £450m every year on news programmes... Sky News spends a TENTH of that, and you can be sure what you see on the news on Sky – which is 39 percent owned by the *Sun*'s parent company News Corporation – is accurate. Unlike the BBC."

For reasons of space, no doubt, the standard bearer of probity forgot to mention that his partner, Kay "the entire eastern seaboard of the United States has been decimated by a terrorist attack" Burley, is the anchor for Sky News Lunchtime Live. Impartiality indeed!

THE following day, however, the paper gave space to a couple of surprisingly sympathetic voices.

"Top companies will applaud its text-book handling of the crisis," the paper's business editor Ian King declared in a page 4 commentary, while no less a personage than Noel Edmonds was roped in to beg for his old job back (surely "defend high standards in public service broadcasting"?) in an op-ed piece describing the "Best Broadcasting Corporation" as "a fantastic media organization, head and shoulders above any other broadcaster across the globe."

Could the paper's reluctance to join the media witch-hunt be in any way connected to occasions where Sky News's own contributions from viewers have emanated from rather closer to the studio – such as the episode of the *Richard Littlejohn* show exposed in the *Eye* back in 2003 (issue 1076) when dozy producers managed to screen several viewers' opinions on stories they had yet to broadcast?

But the catalogue of fakery was not yet over. "ITV's British Comedy Awards ripped off viewers by asking them to vote for their favourite show when the winner had already been picked, the *Sun* can reveal," the paper trumpeted on 26 July. "Viewers were not told they were watching pre-recorded footage and were encouraged to continue voting."

Not unlike the *Sun*'s "Bizarre Reader's Poll", in which gongs for Best Male and Best Group were presented to Justin Timberlake and Take That when showbiz editor Victoria Newton met them last November – despite the fact that the competition was not opened to readers' nominations until 7 December, and photos of the presentation not published until just before Christmas.

Most shocking revelation

"BBC flop Castaway has been exposed as a FAKE... The revelations, by ex-contestant Hassan Kobeissi will be another blow for the Beeb after the scandal over phone-in competition scams. Hassan, 24, has revealed how:

- Cameramen homed in on him and blonde Lucinda King trying to make out they were a couple.
- Footage was chosen and edited to make it all look exciting."

– Daily Star on Sunday, 22 July

ALMOST 40 percent of senior Whitehall jobs now go to appointees from the private sector, according to the latest report from the civil service commissioners. But don't fret: these people aren't expected to live on measly Whitehall salaries.

The commissioners complain that some successful candidates from the private sector "were paid well in excess of the advertised remuneration" – more than twice as much, in one case. By contrast "eight civil servants who were successful after open competition were paid less than the advertised remuneration".

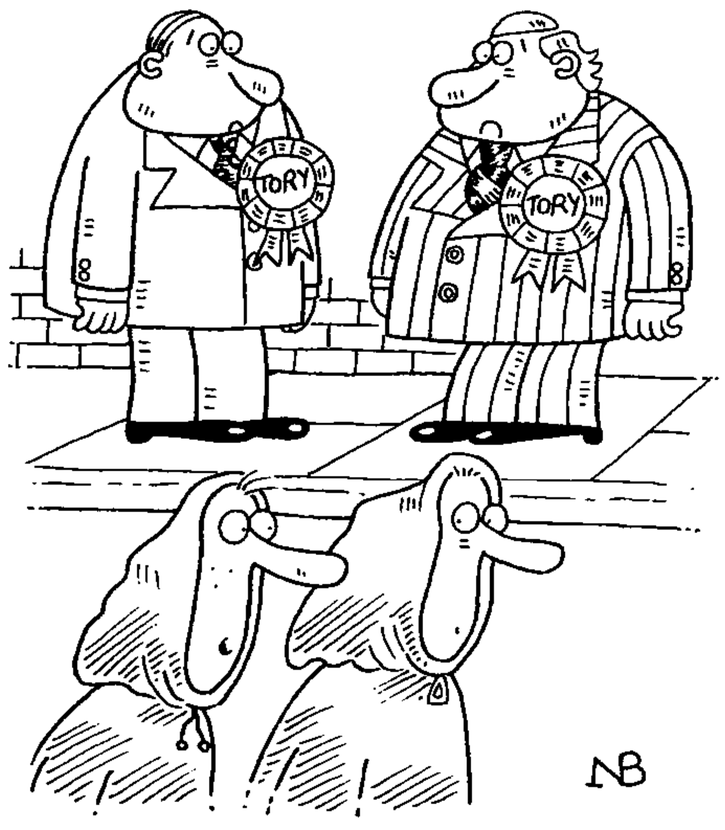
So who are the private sector wizards racing up the Whitehall pay league? One firm features more heavily than any other in the commissioners' list. The Cabinet Office's new "change director" is one Susie Gear, formerly of Accenture. Accenture's old NHS salesman, James Hall, is now chief executive of the Identity & Passport Service, while his old colleague Bill Crothers has left Accenture to become the Identity & Passport Service commercial director. The new commercial director of the Home Office is Accenture's John Collington.

But then Accenture, previously known as Andersen Consulting, has been a firm Labour favourite since the mid-1990s, when it seconded a young whizkid called Liam Byrne to run Tony Blair's "business relations unit". By happy coincidence, Byrne is now a minister at the Home Office!

GOOD to see Her Majesty's scrupulously honest Treasury acting on TV misrepresentations too, following some re-sequencing of a *Newsnight* reporter's shadowing of Gordon Brown shortly before he became PM.

This, the Treasury complained, wrongly suggested its press officer was picking on the reporter. Which of course is completely different to, say, the suggestion Gordon made in his last budget regarding the basic rate of income tax.

Brown announced that the rate had been cut by 2p even though an unexplained removal of tax allowances completely cancelled it out (and left some low earners worse off) – a deliberate, and for a while successful, attempt to mislead parliament and budget commentators into thinking he was cutting taxes.



"They need a hug"

CALLED TO ORDURE

GEORGE Galloway has been making great play of his ejection from the Commons. Banned from parliament for 18 days after the standards and privileges committee investigated his Iraqi Mariam appeal, Galloway likens himself to Spartacus, being persecuted by the "Romans" of the establishment.

Gorgeous George loves being a victim. But to be fair to the old showman, his speech shortly before the summer recess, when he contested his suspension, was a classic. He was helped by some pretty prattish behaviour by his enemies.

Galloway pointed out that he and his appeal are not the only ones with questions hanging over their funding. Jack Dromey, husband of Harriet Harman (who as leader of the Commons attended the debate), was Labour party treasurer. And Richard Desmond was a "substantial benefactor" to Labour. Did Dromey know that this Desmond "was giving from the profits of *Spunk Loving Sluts*, *Asian Babes*, XX pornographic television or the profits of the *Daily Star*"?

Hansard's bluestocking stenographers barely flinched, but for Speaker Martin it was all too much. "Order!" he choked. "We are discussing the report of the standards and privileges committee". Dirty Desmond and his porn mags, the Speaker indicated, were "not relevant to the report". Galloway disagreed. "They are highly relevant," he told the purple-faced Speaker, a prim bore who may well be one of life's missionary position men.

Galloway explained that the standards committee was accusing him of political fundraising yet its members were "responsible for political fundraising on a gigantic scale, from the most dubious of sources". "Order!" croaked Martin again, insisting that the committee's members had "acted in good faith". Galloway told the Speaker his rulings were "beginning to verge on the ridiculous".

A few MPs started trying to give Galloway gyp, but he slapped them down. "I am a short-sword fighter," he roared. "It is Caesar's legions that are gathered here tonight who are going to expel me." He said that as a radio presenter on TalkSport he had "hundreds of thousands of listeners". Unsuccessful MPs hate this sort of boast. It makes them feel like failures.

Andrew Robathan, a Tory former SAS officer, was the person who originally made the complaint about Galloway to the standards committee. (Classic Tory idiot. Did he not realise that Galloway has been one of Labour's fiercest critics? Why discourage the man?) Robathan started to play silly buggers, moving around the opposition benches so that he was first one side of Galloway, then the other, then right to his left. "I am being ambushed!" cried Galloway. "You crept up behind me."

In retaliation he produced a quotation from Robathan which showed that the MP was no master of grammar. "Public school education can do that to your facility for the English language," said Galloway. Robathan became huffy, shouting "Get on with it!" Galloway just re-read the passage which contained Robathan's bad grammar. "I apologise for his English," said Galloway, loving the spat. "He is a soldier. I merely left school at 17 like you, Mr Speaker, to go and work in a factory." Speaker Martin, being extremely chippy, and hating Robathan every bit as much as Galloway, almost purred.

Yet in the end, as always, George pushed his luck too far. The Speaker put a stop to his speech, Galloway left the chamber in a glorious strop and his eviction was passed without audible dissent. His website now features an old Hollywood poster for *Spartacus*: is it coincidence that George himself has grown a Kirk Douglas style beard?

'Gavel Basher'

GORDON BROWN's "new spirit of public service" seems to involve appointing controversial business people to public posts just like Tony Blair's old "spirit of enterprise" did.

Brown put Roger Carr, the deputy chairman of Cadbury's, on to the court of the Bank of England just days before his company was fined £1m for knowingly selling salmonella-contaminated chocolate bars.

Carr is also a controversial choice at the Bank because of his involvement with the private equity industry. He is chairman of British Gas owner Centrica, which sold off the Automobile Association to a group of private equity investors who set about slashing jobs at the AA.

Carr, who has a long history of involvement in takeovers, also advises KKR, one of the largest private equity groups.

Meanwhile Peter Hain, the Work and Pensions Secretary, appointed Judith Hackitt to chair the Health and Safety Commission. She is currently director-general of the Chemical Industries Association, a lobby group, and has worked there since 1998. Under her leadership the association tried to persuade the government that "the implementation of health and safety management systems within industry could reduce the requirement for traditional inspection by HSE". The HSE is currently closing offices and has frozen the recruitment of inspectors.

LABOUR MP Rosie Cooper has been re-selected unopposed in West Lancashire. Hurrah!

Rosie's press release announcing her triumph also carries the exciting news that she has "established a communications team" to be headed by one Frank McKenna. "Frank left full-time politics five years ago," writes Rosie.

Number crunching

18 ■ Number of days George Galloway has been suspended from Commons

10 ■ Number of days George Galloway has actually turned up and voted in Commons this year

"He was recognized as one of the most effective campaign co-ordinators in the North West, and delivered many election victories for the West Lancashire Labour party." Indeed.

Shortage of space no doubt prevented Rosie from mentioning why McKenna, former deputy leader of Lancashire county council, dropped out of politics. In October 1999 *Eye* 987 reported that a secret Labour party audit had found that McKenna, as the election agent of then West Lancs MP Colin Pickthall, had deliberately falsified Thickpall's expenses at the 1997 general election to the tune of around £10,000.

In January 2003 McKenna and fellow former councillor John Fillis faced fraud charges over the affair. At Chester crown court judge Roger Dutton "stayed" the case because, he said, he doubted that a fair trail was possible, given that so much time had elapsed since the alleged offences, and declared the pair not guilty. McKenna went off and set up Downtown Liverpool, a "networking club" to promote the interests of Scouse "entrepreneurs" – very New Labour. Now he is back in West Lancs, lending his valuable skills, so sadly missed these past five years, to the tyro MP. Welcome back!

"We were wondering, Genghis, if you would like to become a peace envoy?"

THE prominence of housing policy in the first weeks of Gordon Brown's tenure has at last forced newspapers to give this topic some serious attention – rather than obsessing endlessly over booming house prices. But the main surprise is that hacks are surprised by Gordon's enthusiasm.

He has been keenly interested in getting more houses built since at least 2003, when he commissioned former CBI economist Kate Barker to "conduct a review of issues underlying the lack of supply". She concluded that an extra 120,000 houses would be required annually in England – on top of the 140,000 already being built each year – to reduce "house price growth" to the European average of 1.1 percent. Over the 12 years to 2020, that produces a figure of around three million – exactly the number announced by housing minister Yvette Cooper when her green paper was unveiled last week.

Why was Brown so interested in housing as far back as 2003, when he was still boasting to the City about Britain's "strong housing market"? The answer can be found in those now rarely-mentioned "five economic tests" for eventual UK membership of the eurozone.

In June 2003, the Treasury concluded that the housing market was a particular stumbling block, with Brown himself adding that "volatility… is a problem for stability". Meanwhile, organisations such as the CBI – Barker's former employers – warned that the high price of private housing was damaging Britain's competitiveness.

Now housebuilders will be granted their dearest wish – more land – despite already owning 14,000 acres with planning permission, enough for 225,000 new redbrick boxes. The new housing and planning delivery grant means that councils allocating more land for development will be given more funds, providing significant temptation for cash-strapped planning departments.

Although Brown insists that development will all be on previously used land, it is hard to see how councils in the home counties – the front line of the housing shortage – will be able to avoid using green fields to meet their targets. Meanwhile, the PM is still turning his blind eye to the latest cause of house-price inflation: not the lack of new homes, but the fact that foreign billionaires are allowed to live in London tax-free. The billions they inject into the capital's housing market – causing wallet-boggling rises in most of central London – filter down to other parts of the south-east, adding to the woes of first-time buyers.

If our new prime minister is serious about housing, perhaps he should take a close look at the benefits he gives to Russian oligarchs before ordering more noddy homes in Hertfordshire.

JUDGE DREADFUL

BEFORE the lord chief justice and lord chancellor set up Mr Justice Peter Smith to be the first English judge to be fired in the 21st century, euphemistic lawyers were hinting that he wasn't up to the job.

Last October *Legal Business* asked them to rate the judges hearing financial cases in the Chancery division. Smith was left at the foot of the table. "Allows his own sense of self to get in the way of his judging," said one. It was "all too easy to say" that the Yorkshireman had been promoted "above his ability as a sop to the provincial Bar", said another. "Blunt and pragmatic, strong on the facts but weak on the law, he's much resented," added a third.

The world's media felt much the same after they gathered in London to witness his playing to the press bench during the claim by the authors of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* that Dan Brown had stolen their bonkers idea that the descendents of Mary Magdalene and Jesus live on in France for his *Da Vinci Code*.

As always, there was a competition to be the first with the news, and the *Lawyer* magazine won the race when an anonymous informant leaked it a draft of Smith's judgment. Instead of accepting the competitiveness of journalists as a fact of life, the judge went wild with the *Lawyer* for spoiling his big media release. He forced Catrin Griffiths, its editor, to hire a lawyer of her own and hauled her up before him to apologise.

Other hacks were more interested in apparently random letters the judge had italicised in his ruling. The first 10 spelt out "smithy code", the rest made no sense at all. Over succeeding weeks, Smith dropped heavy hints that he had used the Fibonacci sequence, and eventually a legal hack on the *Grauniad* decoded the message as "*Jackie Fisher, who are you? Dreadnought.*" It still made no sense, and Smith explained to general bafflement that he was a great fan of Admiral Lord Fisher, who commissioned HMS *Dreadnought* just before the First World War.

The authors of the *Holy Blood* appealed. The appeal court ruled Smith had been right in law to find for Dan Brown because English law allows no copyright on ideas, even bonkers ideas. But they added that his judgment and its silly code had encouraged the appellants to waste money by going back to the courts because it was "not easy to read or to understand".

Tiring of the judging business, Smith then went into novel negotiations with the corporate law firm Addleshaw Goddard. He would quit the bench and give the firm a unique selling point: a real ex-judge who could tell its clients if their claims stood a chance before his former colleagues. Addleshaw Goddard was keen, but blanched at the suggested price for judge and assistant of £750,000 a year. Negotiations degenerated into a rancorous email exchange with Smith raging against the "insulting" and "condescending" refusal of the firm to fill his boots. "You have wasted my time for several months," he declared. "I am extremely disappointed you have allowed bean counters to prevail."

As ill luck would have it, a partner in Addleshaw Goddard was a party in a case before Smith this year. Naturally, he asked the judge to step aside because of the conflict of interest. Smith refused with some vigour. When told by a barrister that his language was "intemperate", he replied: "It's about time you grew up. If you think this is intemperate then you're on another planet to me."

Amazed lawyers ran to the appeal court, which issued an emergency ruling that Smith had to stand down. Smith returned to his court, nevertheless, but said in a rather disconsolate statement that he realised the case wasn't going anywhere when "nobody turned up". The lord chancellor and lord chief justice had no choice but to refer his behaviour to the Office of Judicial Complaints.

No one in legal London knows what's going to happen next. They hope Smith will do the decent thing and pick up the proffered pearl-handled revolver because the Office of Judicial Complaints can't sack him. The Act of Settlement of 1701 protects judicial independence by stating that only a resolution passed by both houses of parliament can force a judge to go, and it may have to come to that.

Meanwhile lawyers are asking whether Smith would have been left alone to carry on being a judge, if it hadn't been for the conflict of interest, and wondering if more appeals may pile up. For the authorities have allowed Smith to carry on hearing cases while the complaints against him are investigated. Now suppose it was your case and you lost. Would you accept the verdict? Or would you point out that both the lord chief justice and the lord chancellor had questioned Smith's suitability for the job – and demand a retrial?

'Ratbiter'

Down on the Farm

AS MEDIA soap opera, the drama over Shambo certainly took some beating.

On the one hand was the chorus of Hindu monks chanting that their sacred bull was doing no harm to anyone and that killing it would be sacrilege. On the other were the grim-faced officials of the Welsh Assembly, supported by a rival chorus of angry Welsh farmers proclaiming that if any of their cattle were found to be infected with TB, they would have to be slaughtered and there was no reason why Shambo should be excepted. Hadn't the tests proved beyond doubt that the animal was infected?

Well no, actually, interjected virologist Dr Colin Fink of Warwick University. The "skin test" showing Shambo as positive for TB is unreliable for diagnosing TB in individual animals. Not only does it throw up "false positives", but it can fail to spot an animal that is genuinely sick.

The fact remains that it was never definitively established whether Shambo was infected with TB or not. The only technique that could have proved this beyond doubt is PCR, or polymerase chain reaction, based on analysing DNA. But this our officials refuse to allow because it might lead to the unravelling of their entire policy on TB in cattle and badgers.

The government knows that the only way to halt the TB epidemic in Britain's dairy herds is to allow selective culling of the hundreds of thousands of TB-infected badgers that spread the disease to cattle (and vice versa). It knows that until the 1980s such culls effectively eliminated TB in cattle, and that this was more recently confirmed in Ireland, where badger-culling reduced TB in cattle by up to 96 percent. It admits that the cost of the unchecked epidemic is now so vast that within seven years the bill for compensating farmers for destroyed animals will reach £2bn.

But so reluctant is the government to allow a cull of sick badgers that it falls back on the only argument left to it: that there is no reliable way of identifying which badgers and setts are infected.

By allowing PCR, which could identify infected setts, the government would lose its only remaining excuse for not eliminating the wildlife reservoir of disease that is threatening the survival of Britain's dairy industry. Much better to remain in ignorance and let taxpayers fund the destruction of 20,000 cattle a year.

After all, it is only when one of those animals happens to belong to some Hindu monks that this vexed issue reaches the headlines. And the one thing our officials are really good at, as we know, is killing animals. So long as they are not badgers or foxes, who cares?

'Muckspreader'

EYE TV

Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip (More4)

Heroes (BBC2)

THIRTY years ago the BBC governors and parliamentary arts committees regularly became exercised about American programming on British television. At that time, BBC1 peak-time had a US import most days of the week – *Dallas, Dynasty, Starsky and Hutch, Ironside* and so on. Later, Channel 4 first became a serious competitor for the older networks by stripping US comedy, such as *Friends* and *Frasier*, across its Friday nights.

Yet, strangely, as America and Britain have become culturally closer in most ways, the telly connection has weakened. With Channel 4 disappointed by the ratings for *Ugly Betty*, the only broadcaster putting serious faith in American product is the smallest of the terrestrial broadcasters, Five, which runs the *CSI* brand in the way other networks have time-checks, but wins smallish audiences.

Last week BBC2 added *Heroes* to Wednesday peak time, but it's a mid-summer launch, suggesting low expectations, and the series has already run here on a digital channel. In the same way, *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*, writer Aaron Sorkin's follow-up to *The West Wing*, which was clearly bought for Channel 4, now finally turns up, after the series has already been cancelled in America, on the super-minority service More4. What this means is that series made in New York and Los Angeles are now officially a minority interest for British audiences.

The reason is that, while Britain has become more American, America has become even more American than it was before, mainly at the levels of language and reference. Whereas *Dallas* and *Starsky and Hutch* were commissioned and written by guys out of the old Hollywood who believed in keeping references as universal as possible, in the hope of national and international appeal, most American television now has producers and writers out of American college media and screenwriting courses, who specialise in allusive, sawn-off dialogue aimed at an educated American elite.

The West Wing was a perfect example of this. For up to half an hour, senators and White House aides would storm down corridors speaking very quickly about something called "Hud". Those who wondered if this was the President's dog waited for the reference to be explained, but it never was, leaving *The West Wing*'s British audience numbering only the 16 or so newspaper editors and columnists who knew, from their postings to Washington, that the dialogue referred to the Office of Housing and Urban Development.

Studio 60 is the same. The punch-line to a joke, during the crucial first few minutes of the opening episode, is "George Plimpton", a late upmarket American sportswriter who also ran the obscure literary magazine *The Paris Review*. Sorkin's love of trade jargon is also demonstrated in the fact that the viewer is supposed to guess that a line like "it killed at dress" means a joke went down well at dress rehearsal. So it's perhaps unsurprising that *Studio 60*, about a comedy sketch show threatened with cancellation by a network that wants commercial hits, proved rapidly prophetic.

Heroes stands slightly more chance of catching on here because it's a version of the Spiderman and Superman myth, in which ordinary people all over America start discovering they have special powers. But, again, the dialogue makes little concession to those who don't closely follow American popular culture and even baseball, and the series also depends on a belief in America as a benevolent world power which evil enemies unfairly target, a worldview which has had few takers on this side of the Atlantic since Iraq. It's probably no coincidence that, since Blair set out to make Britain a division of the US Army, British audiences have favoured stories about homegrown, independent superheroes such as Doctor Who and Harry Potter.

"And now for another evening packed with quality viewing! Actually, that's a lie...most of it is crap"

Both *Studio 60* and *Heroes* seem likely to hit the problem, first suggested by *The West Wing*, that American TV shows no longer work in the UK. The tiny audience they draw will increasingly have satisfied its interest already by buying box-sets or viewing on-line (although controls are theoretically in place to prevent this).

Future programme controllers of BBC2 and Channel 4 are going to have to get by without those handy shopping trips stateside. And, as the BBC Trust and Ofcom face up to the increasing likelihood that everything on television from the weather forecast to Andrew Neill's hair has been fabricated, at least they won't have to be concerned about an influx of American programming.

'Remote Controller'

DUMB BRITAIN

The Big Ask with Gary King, LBC

King: Name the music festival started in 1895 by Sir Henry Wood.
Caller: Glastonbury.

BBC Radio WM
Les Ross: Which form of London public transport was pioneered by George Shillibeer in 1829?
Caller: The M25.

The Weakest Link, BBC2
Anne Robinson: Which German painter was famous for his portraits of Henry VIII? Hans...
Contestant: Solo.

THE QUEEN, THE TYCOON AND THE BRONZED BAZOOKAS

ALL IS serene at production company RDF Media – at least to judge from its website.

The most recent item in its "latest news" section is a story from 15 May revealing that pre-tax profits rose from £4m to £7.1m over the last year. The item before that, dating from 12 April, boasts: "RDF Rights hires new COO [Chief Operating Officer]." The casual browser would hardly guess that RDF has been all over the national news in the past fortnight: no mention of its faked "Queen throws hissy fit" trailer, nor of the decision by both the BBC and ITV not to commission any more programmes until the inquiry into the royal fiasco is concluded.

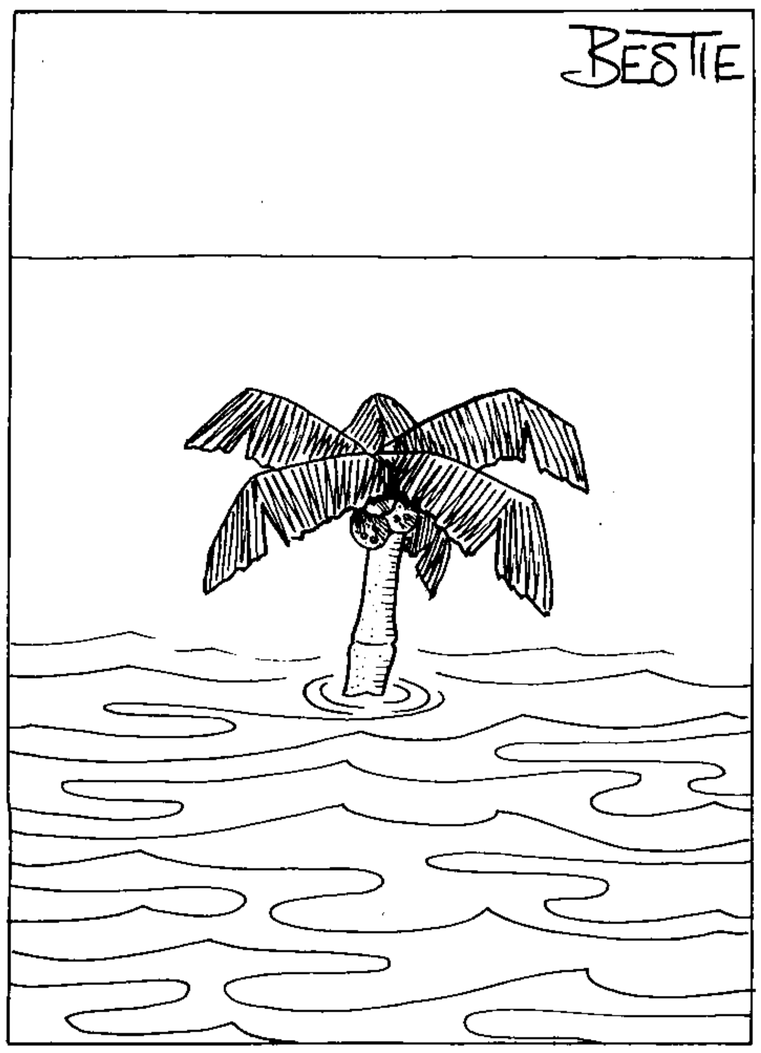
Giving evidence to a select committee of MPs last week, ITV chairman Michael Grade hinted that RDF might never work for his channel again. "If anyone is found to have deceived or lied to viewers, we won't do business with them. Anyone who wants to make programmes for me should be aware that if you are caught deceiving the public it is one strike and you are out."

Perhaps someone should draw his attention to RDF's recent series *The Secret Millionaire*, which featured tycoons going undercover in search of worthy poor people to whom they could give thousands of pounds. The area the millionaires chose and the people they met were ordained beforehand by the production team. Yet viewers were given the impression that the tycoons spontaneously decided everything themselves.

In one show, Scottish curry tycoon Charan Gill struggled to think of anything to say when confronted by a downtrodden manual worker in Norfolk who was struggling to pay his children's maintenance costs. The obliging producer whispered "but you must really love your children" – which Gill duly repeated. In the edited version, it looked as if this was yet another spontaneous sympathetic comment from the caring curry mogul.

The Secret Millionaire was made for Channel 4, which has conspicuously refused to join the BBC/ITV boycott of RDF. Just as well: another series is due in the autumn. The programme is essentially RDF's attempt to move away from the sordid antics of *Wife Swap*, *How to Look Good Naked* and *Ladette to Lady*, and into genuine life-changing TV. But old habits die hard. Here are a few of the programmes available from RDF Rights: *Amateur Porn*, *Female Sexual Fantasies*, *Sex and the Settee, My Penis and I*, *Hairy Women*, *Real Wife Swap* and *Girls With Guns, aka Bazookas on the Beach* ("a tale of bullets, bronzed boob jobs and battling egos").

RDF chief executive David Frank takes pride in them: almost 10 years ago, when the *Eye* first revealed that RDF was distributing soft-porn titles such as *Strippagran* and *Superdick*, Frank complained that we'd omitted *Coping with Large Breasts*, *Missionary in Position*, *Mr Ben Dover* and *Well Hung Jury*. If things get really bad, perhaps Richard "Dirty" Desmond will step in and buy the company.



MEDIA NEWS

HARD-PRESSED hacks at GMTV are celebrating for the first time in months, after managing director Paul Corley was made to do a Captain Oates last week. Never mind the fake phone-quiz scandal which sealed his fate: it was Corley's wilful devastation of the channel's newsroom that prompted the rejoicing at his comeuppance.

Morale among hacks hit rock bottom four months ago when the *Eye* revealed Corley's ingenious wheeze for bribing *(surely "motivating"? – Ed.)* the self-styled "awesome foursome" in charge of the breakfast show – programme director Peter McHugh, editor Martin Frizzell, deputy editor Malcolm Douglas and managing editor John Scammell. His offer was irresistible: the less money you spend on journalism the richer you'll become, by trousering a percentage of any underspend in the editorial budget.

This was a great incentive to avoid covering any stories that might require the slightest expense. And it worked: earlier this year, having vastly underspent the newsroom budget by doing as little reporting as possible, the awesome foursome collected their rewards – a £27,000 bonus each.

"GMTV bears little resemblance to the breakfast service it was meant to be when the station was awarded its franchise," thundered former presenter Eamonn Holmes in his *People* column on 29 July, following the departure of executive Paul Corley for fleecing viewers in premium-rate competitions.

"Money became its god. That led them to swindling £35m of it from a trusting public over the last four years. Management pleads ignorance about what's gone on. I can believe it as, from my experience, they were ignorant on most things."

Someone else who displayed a startling level of ignorance is the man who for nearly half that time was responsible for encouraging viewers to phone in and surrender their cash… the presenter Eamonn Holmes. He stormed off the GMTV sofa in 2005 when Corley and his management colleagues refused to give him a 10 percent pay rise which would have taken his salary to half a million a year – leaving him in a perfect position to preach to readers, as he did this week, that "oodles of cash aren't theirs to give away".

WHEN Radio 4's *The Food Programme* devotes itself to wine, as happened on 22 July, it hands the presenter's chair to genial wine hack Andrew Jefford. In his latest programme Jefford worked in a startling number of plugs for Waitrose and its wines, while making no mention of any other supermarket or wine merchant.

What Jefford forgot to tell listeners is that he writes a monthly wine column for *Waitrose Food Illustrated* extolling the virtues of the supermarket's plonk, and has another lucrative sideline running "tutored tastings" on behalf of the supermarket.

No doubt his bosses at Waitrose were delighted with the programme. But will his bosses at the already hyper-jittery BBC be quite so pleased when they learn the truth?

"MOTORISTS who have stopped their cars to photograph the floods have been criticised by police for endangering themselves and other road users," the BBC News website reported on 23 July.

Directly adjacent to the story was an exciting gallery: "IN PICTURES: Your images of the havoc caused by torrential rain". It was accompanied by full instructions on "how to send pictures".

GOING LIVE

WHERE better for BBC News correspondent Nick Higham to pontificate on director-general Mark Thompson's announcement that all BBC phone-ins and interactive competitions had been suspended and a number of staff sent on gardening leave than from the heart of the BBC newsroom itself?

Well, er, the car park, it would appear.

The *Ten O'Clock News* on 18 July had studio-based anchor Huw Edwards earnestly interviewing his colleague as he stood outside in front of the BBC Television Centre sign, not much more than a couple of staircases and a set of double doors away.

AD NAUSEAM

EVER since tobacco advertising was banned in 2003 it's been fairly obvious that alcohol advertising would be next to go. The recent furore about junk food advertising may have intervened, but now that has died down the move to deny adland's favourite clients – those hilarious beer ads win so many awards! – a shop window is gathering pace.

Last week a cross-party group of 29 MPs signed a Commons motion calling for a 9pm watershed for alcohol advertising. With backing from the British Medical Association and the British Heart Foundation, among others, this surely presages a complete ban. Their cause has been aided by Sir Liam Donaldson, the chief medical officer at the Department of Health, who called for drinks companies to be banned from sponsoring sports and other events associating alcohol with physical fitness. "It's something that worked with tobacco," he said.

No doubt Olympics Minister Tessa Jowell will be thanking him profusely for his comments. As *Eye* 1182 reported, the organising committee for the Olympic Games has been scouting for a tier-one sponsor, worth £80m, in the form of… a beer brand. Budweiser is top of the list.

Next year's Olympic team will not be cock-a-hoop either: Budweiser's parent company, Anheuser-Busch, is a partner of the British Olympic Association and will back the British team in Beijing through its Michelob Ultra brand.

SKY's ongoing tussle with Virgin Media, which is being played out to general indifference on billboards and newspapers countrywide, has showered neither of them in glory. It's a petty spat that means little to consumers, but it's an expensive spat nonetheless.

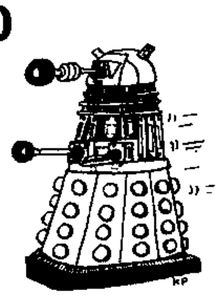
Sky's marketing costs to the end of June have rocketed by 40 percent year-on-year, to £70m. Virgin has spent £37m in the same period. (By way of comparison, Tesco spent around £76m in the whole of 2006.)

Given the general consensus is that both companies' customer service remains pisspoor, perhaps Murdoch and Branson could do everyone a favour and stop their carping: £100m could surely be better spent?

A NEW print campaign for Louis Vuitton's overpriced tat (surely *"luxury goods"? Ed.*) features celebrities with bags. So far, so predictable.

Except that among the posters of Steffi Graf, Andre Agassi and Catherine Deneuve is a brooding picture of one Mikhail Gorbachev. He appears in the back of a taxi with a £500 holdall. Perestroika indeed!

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Andrea Callender will be responsible for developing the pan-BBC diversity strategy and tracking progress. This will include hardwiring diversity into the BBC's DNA by embedding it into key processes around audience outreach, output and content, workforce planning and other BBC priorities."

– Internal memo from BBC People (formerly known as the personnel department)

BLACK HUMOUR

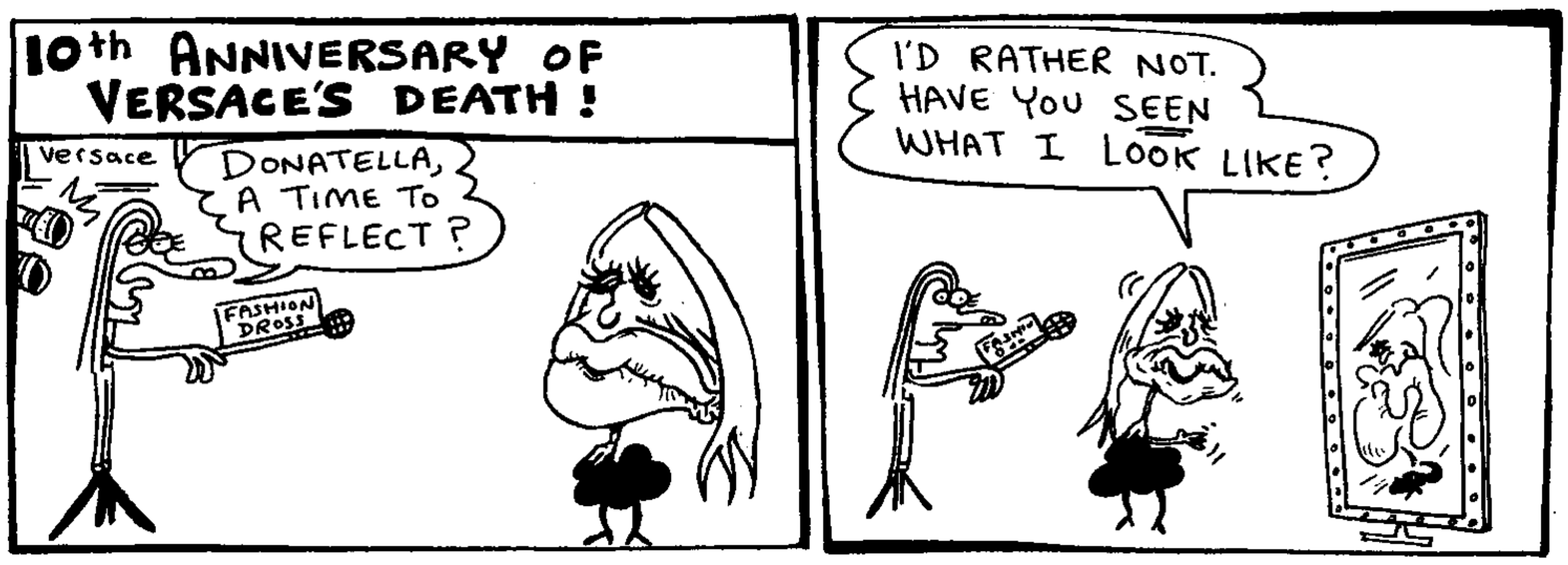
NO SOONER had *Eye* 1187 run a photo of Indianapolis winner Lewis Hamilton under the satirical headline "Celebrations continue as black person driving expensive car is not stopped by police" than Woking's PC Knacker dutifully leapt into action.

The Formula One ace, flagged down while driving his Mercedes CLK500 through Surrey, was stopped by traffic police who wanted to check his road tax and car insurance.

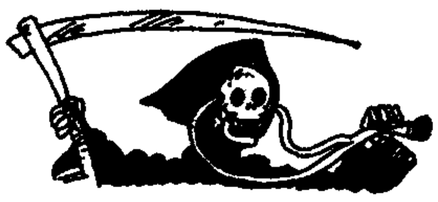
A spokesperson confirmed: "A 22-year-old man was stopped in a routine police check and allowed to go on his way. No offence was recorded or committed."

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


10th ANNIVERSARY OF VERSACE'S DEATH!
Versace
DONATELLA, A TIME TO REFLECT?
FASHION DROSS
I'D RATHER NOT. HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT I LOOK LIKE?

DOING THE ROUNDS



MEDICINE BALLS

How to Save the NHS

AT THE risk of being positive, M.D. has discovered what can happen in the NHS if the staff are allowed to think for themselves and money is spent on patients rather than quangos, consultancies and plcs...

Foot balls

Janette Hynes, an occupational therapist at East London and City Mental Health Trust, uses football to help patients with severe mental illness whilst in hospital, but they had no team to play with when they got out.

Despite resistance from the prevailing attitudes in mainstream football, she set up the Positive Mental Attitude League (PMAL) in 2002. The league now has 14 teams, with 20 waiting to join, and has demonstrated better physical and mental health for its players. Many have lost weight, stopped smoking and got jobs. The league is linked to social services and absence from training allows a player who is relapsing to be picked up much sooner.

Histology therapy

Sue Morgan, clinical nurse specialist at St James' Hospital, Leeds, looks after children and teenagers with cancer. One of them asked her: "What colour is my cancer?" so she set up a service where young patients can view their cancer under a microscope. It's had huge psychological benefits.

Many children (and adults) imagine their cancer as a ravenous beast, all hooded, black and menacing, eating away at them. In reality, their cancers looked like "sausages", "Granny's wallpaper" and "Jelly Beans". Far from trivialising their illness, it's given the children confidence to fight it. A side effect has been that pathologists have started talking to patients again.

ME for kids

Esther Crawley is a consultant paediatrician in Bath specialising in children with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). One in 100 get it badly enough to stop them accessing school (it's the commonest cause of long-term school absence, ahead of leukaemia). And contrary to popular prejudice, it's more common among the poor (they just suffer in silence).

CFS is part genetic, part environmental (it can be triggered by a virus or head injury) and children typically have memory and concentration problems, feel knackered after exertion and have unrefreshing sleep. They can also get pain just about anywhere (head, stomach, joints). Despite a wealth of evidence demonstrating its existence, only one in 10 children receives treatment.

Dr Crawley has developed a regional service covering 500,000 children. She trains other doctors, goes into schools and social services, supports parents, works with charities and spreads the message through the media. But the key to her success is allowing the children to work out and manage their own rehabilitation programmes.

Children hate being ill, they want to get better and they do. As Crawley puts it: "In 80 percent of the cases, the child makes the diagnosis before the GP. I advise them to ask for tests and referral." So children with CFS, one of the most ignored and vilified illnesses of recent years, make their diagnoses, get referred, help design their rehabilitation programmes and achieve full recovery 90 percent of the time. The message is clear. Use the creativity of professionals to free patients to sort themselves out. And it might save the NHS.

M.D.

"The public school drugs culture has really affected Billy Bunter"

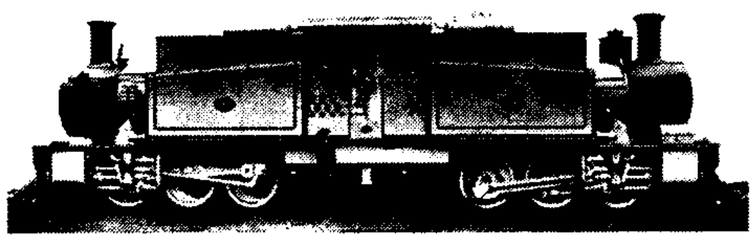
HIGH PRINCIPALS

SOON after it was revealed that University of Ulster (UU) vice-chancellor Professor Richard Barnett and six colleagues had accepted £2,000 Rolex watches from Saudi business empire SAAD Group, Stormont Assembly member Sir Reg Empey was asked if his department – which funds Barnett's institution – had tackled the university on the matter.

No, came the reply, because the UU is "an independent autonomous institution, with responsibility for its own policies and practices, including those in relation to corporate gifts and hospitality".

Sir Reg knows a bit about corporate freebies himself. Last year, he and his wife Lady Empey stayed for two weeks at the luxury French château of Belfast tycoon Terry Cross. Meanwhile, an employee of a government agency that has grant-aided Cross's company was suspended over a much shorter stay at the same château.

The UU, meanwhile, has defended acceptance of the watches on the touching grounds that refusal would have offended. It also says a deal it has struck to provide nursing courses for a SAAD college in Saudi Arabia will net the university £40m.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Shite paper

GORDON BROWN's government showed last week that it can match Tony Blair's spin-for-spin when it announced "the most ambitious strategy for growth on the railways for 50 years".

Hacks smelled a rat when they were told fares wouldn't rocket by 2014, but most accepted the rail white paper at face value. So here's a guide to the highlights and what they really mean...

1,300 extra carriages

Equal to 10 percent of the current total – yet the white paper predicts 22.5 percent more passengers.

Simpler tickets

"There will be just four types of ticket – anytime, off-peak, super off-peak and advance – to bring greater clarity," says the government. The "super off-peak" concept was introduced by South West Trains two months ago; super off-peak used to be off-peak, and off-peak (with much higher fares than the old off-peak) now means trains to London, but not from London, between the morning peak and midday so long as they're not in the London zonal-fare area and it's not a weekend, in which case they're super off-peak. Now the government wants to bring this, ahem, "greater clarity" to the rest of the country, where there are now three rather than four ticket types. Many more people will now struggle to work out what "super off-peak" means.

Approval for £5.5bn "Thameslink programme"

This is the renamed "Thameslink 2000" project, delayed *ad nauseam* since the government approved it in 1996 – when it was expected to cost £650m.

£425m for Reading bottleneck

Urgently needed, promised in the 1990s but still not started.

£120m to "tackle congestion" at Birmingham New Street

The cash is to improve the station concourse rather than ease the congested tracks.

150 stations to be upgraded

Which means the other 2,350 must wait until after 2014.

Train reliability will rise to 92.6%

It will still be measured by punctuality at the final station rather than each station along the way; the new target could be met by adding minutes to schedules at the end of journeys.

Is that all?

No. There will be no electrification to cut rail's carbon footprint; no "regional lines" to reopen in England (unlike Scotland); the decision on a north-south high-speed line has been postponed again; there was no mention of the east-west link (Oxford-Cambridge via Milton Keynes) to relieve London routes; and pisspoor bus-style "pacer" trains will remain for another 10 years.

MINISTERS want us to believe that subsidy can halve by 2014 and passengers make up the difference without fares rocketing.

Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly said the extra passengers would enable subsidy to fall – but a footnote to a table on "forecasted soures [sic] and applications of funding" in the white paper suggests most of the extra £4bn per year to be collected from passengers by 2013-14 will come from higher fares. It says the figures in the table make no allowance for "additional revenue growth generated by the 1,300 extra carriages" or other initiatives to "stimulate passenger demand".

The government's prediction of 22.5 percent more passengers doesn't square with the predicted 80 percent increase in income from rail fares between now and 2014. And the government expects fares income to rise by a third in just the next two years, long before the 1,300 extra carriages or "Thameslink programme" appear.

Kelly tried blaming the Tories. She said Labour was saddled with the cost of clearing up "the mess of a botched privatisation", that subsidy had nearly doubled in the Railtrack years and that the balance between taxpayer and passenger contributions should now return closer to British Rail's ratio. What she didn't mention was that Labour has continued the "botched privatisation" for 10 years, or that the obvious alternative to raising fares is to simplify the industry to cut bureaucracy and renationalise to stop profits bleeding away.

PS: The white paper itself was an example of rail's red tape. An army of civil servants spent almost two years preparing it and the accompanying "high level output specification", which will be used by bureaucrats at the Office of Rail Regulation over the next 17 months to determine how much money Network Rail will get in 2009-14.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BUNGS 'R' US

YET another triumph for the useless Standards Board for England, the multi-million pound watchdog meant to enforce ethical standards among councillors.

Last December a BNP councillor in Bradford, Paul Cromie, sent a Christmas card containing a fiver and his council card to each of 210 pensioners in a sheltered housing complex in his Queensbury ward. Cromie's wife was also elected as a BNP councillor in that ward, with a majority of 155, the following May.

After a seven-month "investigation" the SBE's "ethical standards officer" concluded that "an objective member of the public... could well view Cllr Cromie's donation... as an inducement to vote for the BNP". You don't say!

Nevertheless the SBE still let Cromie get away with bribing voters. While concluding that he had indeed "brought his office into disrepute" by greasing the palsied palms of Bradford's oldies, it accepted his excuse that he once asked a senior council officer, after giving money to a local church, whether he always needed to check before making donations to "worthy causes" – and was told No.

In the circumstances, the SBE concluded, "no further action" needed to be taken.

Previous SBE cases reported by this column include the councillor who called Chichester district council's email system "crap" (suspended for a year, *Eye* 1159); the councillor who said Hull's housing department wasn't very good (suspended for five months, *Eye* 1140); and the Lancaster councillor who blew the whistle on a secret, illegal, rates concession of £18,000 to a nuclear power station (banned for three months, *Eye* 1140). But bribing voters? No penalty whatsoever. So much for the SBE's mission to restore "confidence in local democracy"!

ROAD TO RUIN

THE WET weather has come to the rescue of Herefordshire council, which was embarrassed by the discovery earlier this year of an extraordinary 4,000-year-old bronze age monument in the path of a controversial road scheme.

Opponents of a new access road from the A49 to the Rotherwas industrial estate, south of Hereford, had long suspected that the road was part of a "bypass by stealth" as it was along the line of a proposed ring-road which had been turned down by the Department of Transport in the 1990s. The new road is to be funded by the regional development agency, Advantage West Midlands, and developers who are keen to build 300 homes nearby. Last month it was revealed that archaeologists had discovered a "serpent-shaped" structure of burnt stones and post holes snaking its way up Dinedor Hill, in the path of the road. Despite calls for a full excavation, the council declared that the site would be "preserved" for future generations – by having the road built on top of it! In the meantime, with the topsoil removed, but no protection in place, it has been exposed to the full force of recent rainstorms. As the *Eye* went to press this unique archaeological find was steadily being washed away.

BOXING NEWS

"Ludlow town council descended into chaos this week after allegations of an assault saw town clerk Paul Russell suspended on full pay..."
– Front page, *South Shropshire Journal*, 20 July

"The revival of Ludlow Boxing Club began in style... 'It's a good sign for the future," said [organiser] PC Tony Sewell. 'I want to thank everyone who has helped ... particularly town clerk Paul Russell'."
– Back page, *South Shropshire Journal*, 20 July

PARK 'N' TAKEN FOR A RIDE

ALLERDALE council in Cumbria has struck a deal which highlights all that is good in public-private partnerships... for the private sector.

Under the terms of an agreement with Park Safe, a firm that built a multi-storey car park in Workington, the council can no longer offer cheap parking to its citizens if it puts Park Safe's profits at risk.

The council has had to increase its charges at its municipal car parks to help make the new private multi-storey a more attractive proposition to drivers, with charges at one of the council's sites having almost doubled.

When officers put this to councillors for ratification, the members were told in a background report: "Under its agreement with Park Safe, the council is obliged to operate its municipal car parks in such a manner that they will not be detrimental to the economic success of the multi-storey car park." Councillors were warned that Park Safe could take legal action if the council failed to raise car parking charges to be more in line with the multi-storey.

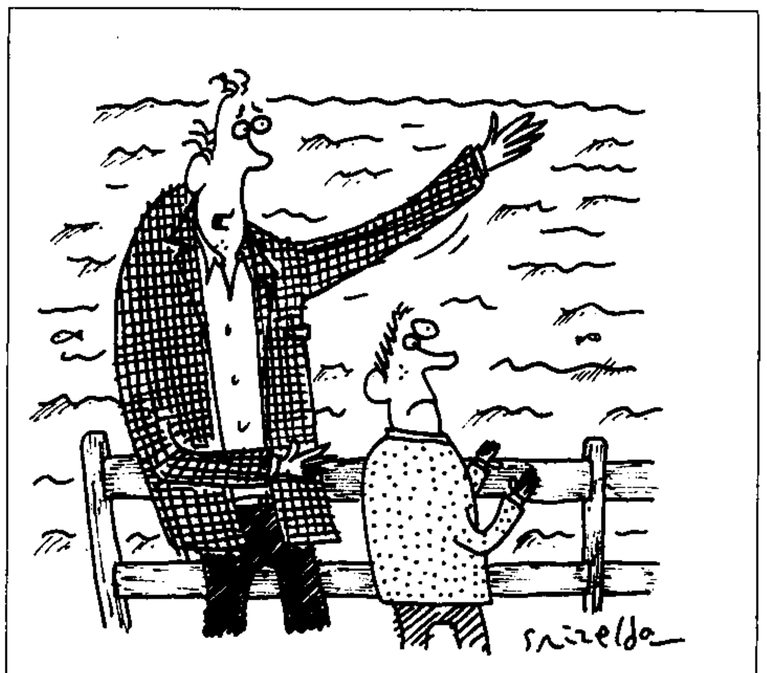
The car park's opening last year was delayed and it went £150,000 over budget. Councillors were told by officers that the council – which will share in any profits – was liable for half of that figure, because it had agreed to pay 50 percent of any overspend.

When the council's scrutiny committee called for an investigation into the behaviour of officers, the ruling executive vetoed it. Instead members decided to congratulate officers – and to lend Park Safe £75,000 to cover its share of the overspend.

● LAST month official figures revealed that the London borough of Tower Hamlets had the worst recycling record of any council in the country.

The man in charge of this, er, rubbish performance is one Alex Cosgrave, the Labour council's "corporate director of environment and culture", who earns a splendid £148,173.38 a year – one of the highest-paid dustmen in the country.

Mr Cosgrave is one of 27 individuals earning more than £100,000 a year at Tower Hamlets, which is one of the most deprived boroughs in Britain. Can these facts possibly be related? Answers on a postcard, please.



"One day, son, all this will be houses..."

POOL OF TEARS

CAMPAIGNERS battling to keep open the popular Ladywell pool in the London borough of Lewisham are having difficulty discerning what the borough's elected Labour mayor, "Sir" Steve Bullock, really thinks. Well, perhaps not.

First Bullock was determined the pool should be demolished and a new school built on the site (*Eye* 1156). But after last year's local elections, when Labour lost its three councillors in Ladywell ward, Bullock was converted to the swimmers' cause. The pool would remain open, he said. In fact, he claimed, that was what he had always wanted (*Eye* 1181) – despite having being quoted in *Time Out* days earlier as saying: "The campaign to Save Ladywell Pool is pathetic. It is led by a very small group of backward-looking people."

Now Bullock appears to have changed his mind yet again. The council has appointed "independent consultant" John Wolfenden to determine the fate of the leisure centre.

FACT: Wolfenden's company, JW Project Services, has been awarded a contract by Lewisham to project-manage the development of a new leisure centre at Loampit Vale.

FACT: Loampit Vale will only get the go-ahead if Ladywell is demolished.

No conflict of interest there, then!

ROYAL FLUSH

HAVE councillors in Carmarthenshire been dazzled by the presence of royalty in their midst?

When the Prince of Wales bought the Llwynywormwood estate near Myddfai last year, much was made of the fact that it would be his first actual home in Wales. The modest farmhouse, in the grounds of a ruined mansion, would be used as a meeting place for his charities and let as a holiday home when Chaz and Camilla were not there – ie most of the time.

Strict planning rules bar locals from building any new homes in the Carmarthenshire countryside that are not for the use of agricultural or forestry workers. So Carmarthenshire's decision to grant Charles planning permission to build two holiday homes adjoining the farmhouse, to be let at a modest £1,500 a week, has not impressed *hoi polloi*.

But then Charles, who made £15m last year from the Duchy of Cornwall's property investments, always strives for a "balance over the long term between the Duchy's commercial objectives and its environmental and social responsibilities". So it must be all right, then.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER

I DIDN'T REALISE YOU GUYS WERE INTO ASTRONOMY
I'M NOT SURPRISED. MARVELLING AT THE HEAVENS PUTS ALL OUR PETTY PROBLEMS INTO SOME KIND OF COSMIC PERSPECTIVE...
WE ACTUALLY USE IT TO MONITOR OUR NEIGHBOURS' HOME IMPROVEMENTS. WE'VE GOT TO KEEP UP...
YOU MAY NEED TO SIT DOWN, JEZ, THE SWINES AT 52 HAVE ONLY GONE AND INSTALLED BRUSHED CHROME WASH BASINS!!!

NOOKS and CORNERS

WHY is the government so determined to ignore the issue of energy and material conservation in the built environment and pull down viable old buildings to make way for shiny new ones?

This "Pathfinder" approach (the schemes to demolish thousands of perfectly sound terraced houses in favour of new build) is now seen in the policy of replacing solid and adaptable school buildings.

The London borough of Tower Hamlets recently demolished Bonner Street School, an early and handsome Board School, to make way for a public finance initiative building scheme when it could easily have been kept in use or converted into flats (*Eye* 1182); and the borough is now selling the Bishop Challoner School in Christian Street, off Cable Street. In use until recently, it is to be demolished to make way for new housing by Belway Homes.

The Arnot Street School

In Southwark, meanwhile, the council is giving planning permission to demolish the Friern School on the corner of Peckham Rye and Homestall Road. This fine Board School of 1896 by T.J. Bailey – another of those "lighthouses… beacons of the future" as Arthur Conan Doyle described them – is going to make way for one of the controversial new Harris Academies.

The government's ill-considered "Building Schools for the Future" programme, funded via Gordon Brown's pet PFI, is very good news for building contractors but it may not be such a boon for all children.

The thinking behind the policy or rebuilding and improving secondary and primary schools is that there is a direct relationship between standards of education and the quality of school buildings. This is surely true – but that does not mean new must be better than old. Many new PFI-built schools have turned out to be functionally inadequate and as architecturally mediocre, while older schools can be adaptable as well as solid. A "loose fit" structure with big spaces rather than specialised rooms can even be an advantage.

Apart from questions of architectural quality and their importance as local landmarks and symbols, older school buildings are usually well-built and durable too. All they require is basic maintenance – something they often do not receive from local authorities. To destroy such buildings for no good reason is a waste of materials and resources – especially as they are eminently convertible into flats or for other uses.

As its 2005 pamphlet on *The Future of Historic School Buildings* states: "Where the asset is of proven historical and architectural significance, retains its integrity or is valued by the local community, English Heritage will favour an approach which promotes its repair, refurbishment and reuse as a school rather than direct replacement… Adaptation or remodelling will use fewer raw materials and expend less energy than complete demolition and replacement." Yet the "Culcha" Department remains strongly disinclined to list school buildings and the casualty rate is accelerating.

This attrition is not confined to London. In Liverpool, most of the fine and progressive Board Schools built in the late 19th century, of which there were about 100, have gone. When the heroic Florence Gerston of The Save Our City Campaign began a survey in 1999, just 23 were left. At the time, Liverpool's education system was notoriously useless and incompetent, and, as part of reforming the system, it seems to have been thought necessary to destroy innocent and misused buildings – image is what counts in politics, after all.

Several were abandoned and, unprotected, fell victim to arson. Today fewer than ten survive, some derelict. Only two are listed: one, in Arnot Street – a building by Edmund Kirby of 1883-91 – was proposed for demolition and is still threatened; the other, in Beaufort Street, is a ruin after a recent arson attack.

This survey was undertaken when Liverpool council gave permission for the demolition of the former Pupil-Teacher College in Clarence Street, a superbly built and fitted-out building of 1897 by Mellard Reade. English Heritage recommended it for listing as "nationally significant" and "a most remarkable building of very fine architectural quality and also great historic interest", but the then Secretary of State, John Prescott, declined.

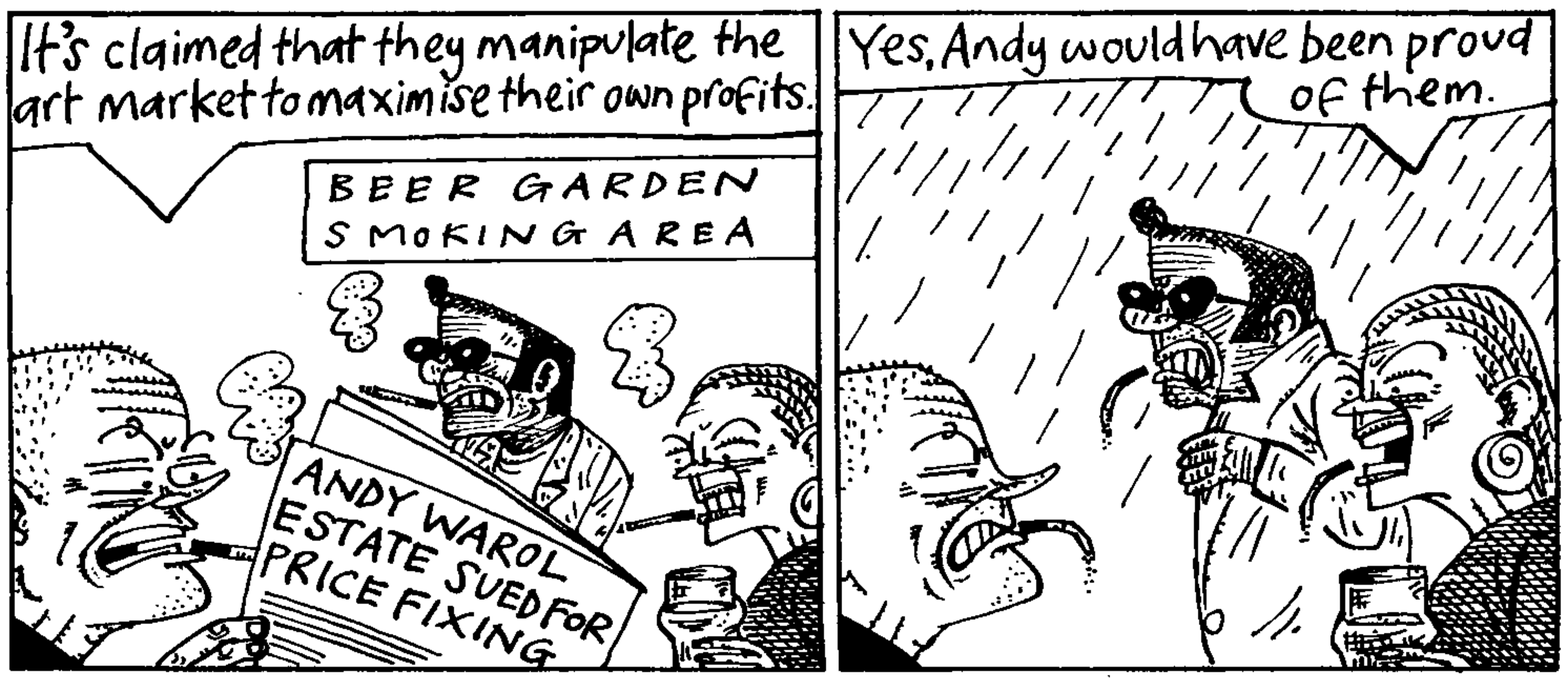
SAVE Britain's Heritage took the matter to judicial review and Two Jags' decision was quashed in the high court as he had given no reasons. SAVE also demonstrated that the building could be adapted for use by Liverpool Community College, but then Prescott came up with reasons for demolition by an un-named "authority" and the magnificent building was lost. Labour politicians stick together.

When Florence Gerston began her survey, she spoke to a number of head teachers and administrators who told her they had been informed that their buildings would, in a year or so, be demolished and replaced. "Not one of these people was happy about this proposal but they all told me that virtually no money had been spent on maintenance and repair, for many years." When government, local authorities and architects bang on about "sustainability", do they know what the word means?

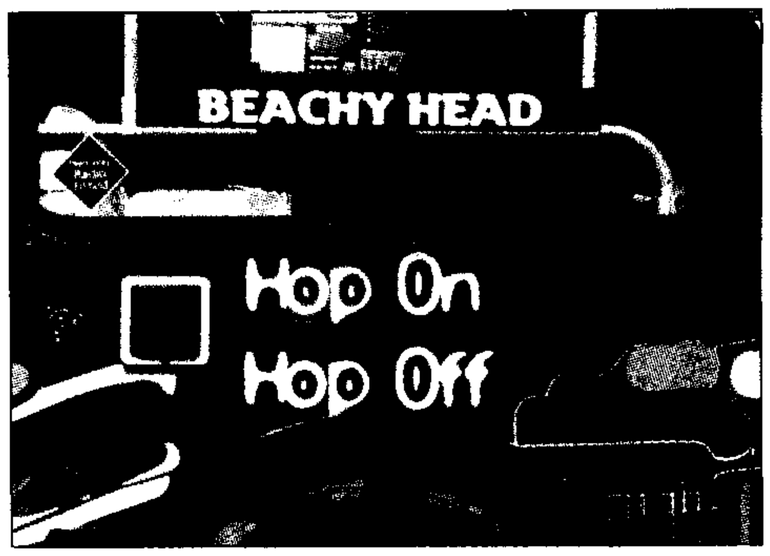
'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


It's claimed that they manipulate the art market to maximise their own profits.
BEER GARDEN SMOKING AREA
ANDY WAROL ESTATE SUED FOR PRICE FIXING
Yes, Andy would have been proud of them.

I-SPY *Eastbourne bus*



Submitted by Marc Dixon. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs)*

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE surreal speed with which sunshine turns to rain in the opera world has been proved once more with the sudden departure of Michael Hunt as chief executive of the Wexford Opera Festival.

Only a few weeks ago, when the festival opened for its 2007 summer season, the affable and easy-going Hunt was at the launch party meeting, greeting and basking in the achievement of having screwed an extra €850,000 from the Irish Arts Council for the temporary theatre that housed this year's productions while a permanent one is being built for next year.

But before the festival was over, word spread that Hunt had quietly been sacked. And so he had. Barely 12 months into a seven-year contract, he had been informed by the festival chairman that he was still in a probationary period and that his services would no longer be required. That the contract made no reference to probationary periods was, apparently, irrelevant.

Understandably Hunt wasn't happy about this. A well-known stage director, previously in charge of the Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, and the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, he had a reputation to consider. So, taking immediate action he went to the high court in Dublin and got an injunction against the festival to stop the dismissal. Now, after much legal jiggery and pokery, it has been announced that Hunt will leave on "agreed terms", which include a substantial pay-off, including his court costs, and publication of a classically begrudging acknowledgement of how his "considerable skills" had contributed to the two festivals he'd worked on.

But what hasn't emerged from all this is the reason for the sacking. Wexford isn't saying much. But Hunt has let it be known there were two issues. One: that he took time off at weekends to be with his family in Galway – not, you might have thought, a criminal offence; and two: that he refused to wear black tie at festival performances, preferring an open-necked shirt and trademark straw hat.

It may beggar belief that this sartorial issue could have been decisive in the appointment or otherwise of someone with stewardship of millions of euros in public funding (the new Wexford theatre is costing €33m at least), but in Ireland it's just about possible.

Wexford is a loved and valued institution, but it clings to the disagreeable idea of opera as background music for a swanky night out. Social inclusiveness is not on the agenda. And its new-rich patrons are so absorbed in conspicuous consumption they make Glyndebourne look egalitarian. That Michael Hunt was ever able to breeze into this arthritic culture with his open-necked shirts, straw hats and (dare it be said) belief that he could focus Wexford's aspirations on more important things than champagne and social-climbing was, from the start, remarkable. That his efforts have ended so badly, and so swiftly, is a shame.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Letters

Bach humbug

Sir,

I am surprised, after reading the extended personal attack on my work in Music & Musicians (20 July), that Private Eye isn't a little more sympathetic to my being willing to defend and test our freedoms of expression under the laws against the glorification of terrorism, which is a side effect of my libel case against the Standard for publishing a review of my opera Manifest Destiny in the Edinburgh Festival which more than implied I support suicide bombing.

As Manifest Destiny is a work about the renunciation of violence by would-be *suicide bombers who destroy their bombs and become advocates of peace and no redress was offered to correct the publication I had to take legal action.*

I would never put myself through the ordeal of litigation unless there were huge issues of principle involved with implications for us all.

And yet your article in Music & Musicians portrays my action as "political opportunism".

You go on to ridicule my describing my own music on BBC TV's Classic Britannia series as "ravishingly beautiful", but the whole point of making the observation is that for decades it has been actually, in effect, forbidden for new classical music to aspire to those levels of direct aesthetic and emotional power, the whole culture of new classical music labouring under the yoke of an infinitely tired and exhausted diktat to be dissonant which is still considered, after a hundred years, yes, really, a hundred years, to be the stamp of "modernity" and "experiment".

This is now a very bad joke.

The principle of freedom of expression is again raised, and what "controversy" I have been involved with has always stemmed from my determination to fight for that principle at whatever personal cost.

Of course Mozart and Bach knew better than anyone that it is tonality that releases the expressive power of dissonance and that the tension between consonance and dissonance is the core of the power of music, so any good composer will know the centrality of dissonance. But unmitigated dissonance doth for a very tedious century of music make. The freedom to break those chains has to be fought for.

And does the writer not think a composer should be aware of their own work? Do they imagine that when Beethoven had completed the "Eroica" he thought to himself "that's not all that impressive" or after Wagner penned the final notes of The Ring Cycle after 25 years of its composition he made a mental note to himself "must try harder"?

There is of course an internal self-critical process, but that has to allow the composer to be moved and astonished by their own work. Why else write?

Yours sincerely,
KEITH BURSTEIN,

Via email.

Sum mistake

Sir,

Re Issue 1189 page 10 "The Examiners Examined".

At least most exam boards employ good proof-readers. Your simultaneous equation example would not, I hope, have been printed in an Edexcel Maths paper. (For the second "=" read "+": there's a little button marked shift which makes a lot of difference!)

Having been an examiner for nearly 30 years may I relate my favourite anecdote? A senior examiner (not with Edexcel) once told me that he kept an array of different pencils and pens beside him while he was marking. This was so that he could insert the odd dot or comma that the students had "inadvertently" missed.

Examiners (and teachers) are human. Poor Helen Bowen (reported in the Daily Mail, 18 July, page 38) was struck off for trying to improve her pupils' grades. May I advise her to apply for a job in a Turkish school, where her talents will be well respected?

Yours,
ANGUS MACDONALD,

Via email.

●Thanks to the many readers who spotted Invigilator's deliberate mistake. The equation should have read 5x + 6y = 28, x + 3y = 2. Ed.

Mock exams

Sir,

Should we be surprised that examiners ask questions about what's in the curriculum? As we know what the curriculum is, of course it is predictable what questions will come up. Isn't that the point? What should they ask questions about – things that aren't in the curriculum?

No A-C grade for this article. See me afterwards.*

Yours sincerely,
MURRAY COWELL,

Via email.

Sir,

I hope that I'm not the only reader massively relieved that this year's Maths GCSE includes questions involving simultaneous equations. Perhaps grammar in the English examination next year?

It's also nice to know that there's a design and technology examination involving the design of some technology. Perhaps there's hope for the world after all.

STEVEN HEYWOOD,

Via email.

Fab four

Sir,

I note your correspondent Ben Stead's letter on the third Miliband brother Glenn. What is even less well know is there is in fact a fourth brother Steve, who is also musician. Who knows, perhaps Steve's political siblings were the inspiration for his hits "Abracadabra", "The Joker" and "Take the Money and Run"?

ALAN BURLISON,

Via email.

Sir,

I fear your editorial standards are falling yet again. In the last issue you published incorrectly labelled photographs of recently promoted politicians Ed, Ted and David Balls. I'd be grateful if you could rectify your mistake to save us all from further confusion, and clarify exactly which one is married to Ruth Kelly.

Yours faithfully,
KERRY JONAS,

Via email.

Taking the p

Sir,

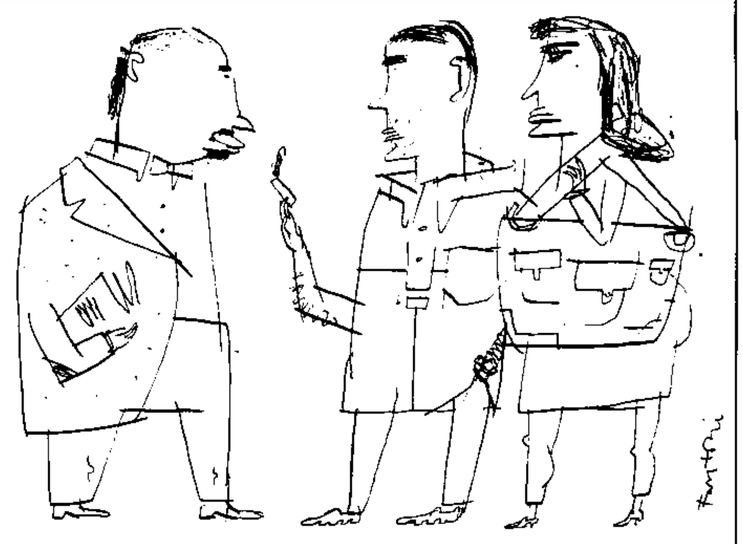
With regard to the cartoon in issue 1189, Tintin stories were not "comic" and it was Thomson and Thompson (or Dupont and Dupond).

I'd have thought you would know better given Hislop's quiff.

ALEXANDER KEITH,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Sorry Millie and I didn't make it to your party. We couldn't be bothered."

Rejoinder of the day

Sir,

Why not read Estonian novels in translation, instead of books by some sicko from far away?

There, you can read real-life things about, for instance, how the lovely pre-Putin Russians shipped off the whole of the Estonian government to Siberia in 1940 and shot many of them. There's meaningless violence for you. Reading what one doughty little Baltic nation has produced is surely much easier than first learning an oriental language with three alphabets, if all you can then read in it is Mucky-Rami, whose banal drawing-room oeuvre you so glowingly described in Private Eye 1188. Even Estonians get translated. By me.

Your review of Murakami's "After Dark" has flattered my ego, in that I intuited long ago that I didn't want to read him. I now know. Even an Estonian lady I know, who took the trouble to learn Japanese, said that Murakami was violent, and maybe pervy. But she needed the money, so she's now translated one of his books. Such is the power of commercialism.

If you think either my surname below, or all this stuff about Estonian literature is fake, do look up my name on Google. A translation of mine was also published by Harvill, as it then was, in 2003 but will have reached the remainders bins, through lack of promotion. Murakami is, however, hyped to the heavens and is one of Harvill-Secker's big money-making hits. Envious? Course I am. One of the reasons that "Treading Air" by Jaan Kross sold so few copies is that there never was a launch. Why? Because at the same time Harvill were shelling out for the lavish launch of a novel by who other than... Haruki Murakami.

Kind regards,
ERIC DICKENS,

Via email.

Bourn again

Sir,

Your attack on Sir John Bourn surely goes too far in Issue 1189. I write as a senior civil servant now retired some 17 years. Now, as then, I suppose, not only each Departmental Minister but also each Permanent Secretary (but only he/she) is accorded free car travel between home and work. Which is certainly paralleled for the senior ranks of large and not-so-large companies. Whether any tax liability arises in some or all cases, I do not know. But "employers" seem to seem to find such arrangements justified/ worthwhile. Whoever exactly is Sir John's employer presumably judges similarly.

RICHARD BIRD,

Sevenoaks.

Unbalanced

Sir,

Kenneth Duvall (Letters 1189) says that he enjoys reading Private Eye and expects its coverage to be accurate and balanced. Is he mad?

MICHAEL MURPHY,

Sheffield.

Court out

Sir,

Mucksprеader is in a right mucking fuddle regarding the facts of the Rawlings' case (Eye1188).

The facts are:

PSD's remit covers pesticides, not pharmaceuticals.

PSD aims to ensure the safe use of pesticides, to protect users, the environment and, of course, consumers.

Mucksprеader reports the court case as involving "the same products, made by the same companies" – wrong. Authorisation of a crop protection product covers not only the active ingredient but also the formulation and packaging amongst other features. All affect how the product should be stored, handled and used.

Issues in this court case included the sale of a product whose authorisation for sale in the UK had been revoked some years ago by a committee of experts independent of Defra or PSD – the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, and the sale of a product which although approved for use, was packaged in a manner not approved in the UK, thereby potentially exposing sprayer operators to increased risks.

So who should come out of this smelling of roses – Mr Rawlings who was found guilty of three offences or PSD which aims to protect UK sprayer operators, consumers and the environment?

Yours faithfully,
HAZEL DOONAN,

Head of Agronomy and Crop Protection Sector, Agricultural Industries Confederation.

Bad cop?

Sir,

I was interested to read the Lord Stevens' nickname in the Met was "Swifty" and even more intrigued to read his explanation. Nicknames in the Met tend to be ironic and often give a clue as to the owner's predilections. For example "sticky" or "twiggy" might indicate that someone is too fond of using their truncheon (stick or twig in Metspeak) and "torchy" follows the same rule. Someone who is given the soubriquet "Gurkha" might think that it refers to their indomitable fighting spirit whereas it really means that they "take no prisoners" and avoid arresting anyone.

In the same vein "swifty" often meant someone who had a tendency to be a bit "swift" in making arrests; for example, before they had any evidence or reasonable suspicion. I have never worked with Lord Stevens so I have no idea whether this nickname is justified nor had I ever heard it used in connection with him until I read the latest Eye.

Best wishes,
CLIVE GILES (EX-KNACKER),

Via email.

Smack on the wrist

Sir,

Although I share your assertion that Pete Doherty is a tit, I found myself shaking my head with disbelief at your review of his book in issue 1189.

First off, your reviewer describes him as having taken a "strictly pharmaceutical route". As anyone fule kno, Pete's drug of choice is heroin, which is extracted from poppies and therefore doesn't go through any pharmaceutical process whatsoever. Therefore, Mr Doherty can be said to have taken a strictly ***narcotic*** *route.*

The piece then went on (rather stuffily) to berate the use of written scribbles in Pete's Collected Writings. I rather feel that your hack is missing the point here. A few years ago, Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain's drug-addled scrawls were published warts and all. The Doherty book is an attempt to mirror this voyeuristic tome in look and feel.

I would also argue with "large chunks of the populace hate him", as stated in your article. I think you'll find that the majority of us don't really give a shit about him.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL CHARALAMBOUS (ROCK DAD),

Via email.

Lookalike

Dyb, dyb, dyb

Dob, dob, dob

Sir,

At the Scout Association's centenary jamboree last week, I acquired photos of two lads who attended that first Baden-Powell camp 100 years ago. Identical twins, by the look of them, and clearly keen as mustard – but alas anonymous. Do any of your readers know who these forgotten pioneers might be?

Yours,
ARCHIE WHEEN,

Essex.

Colemanballs

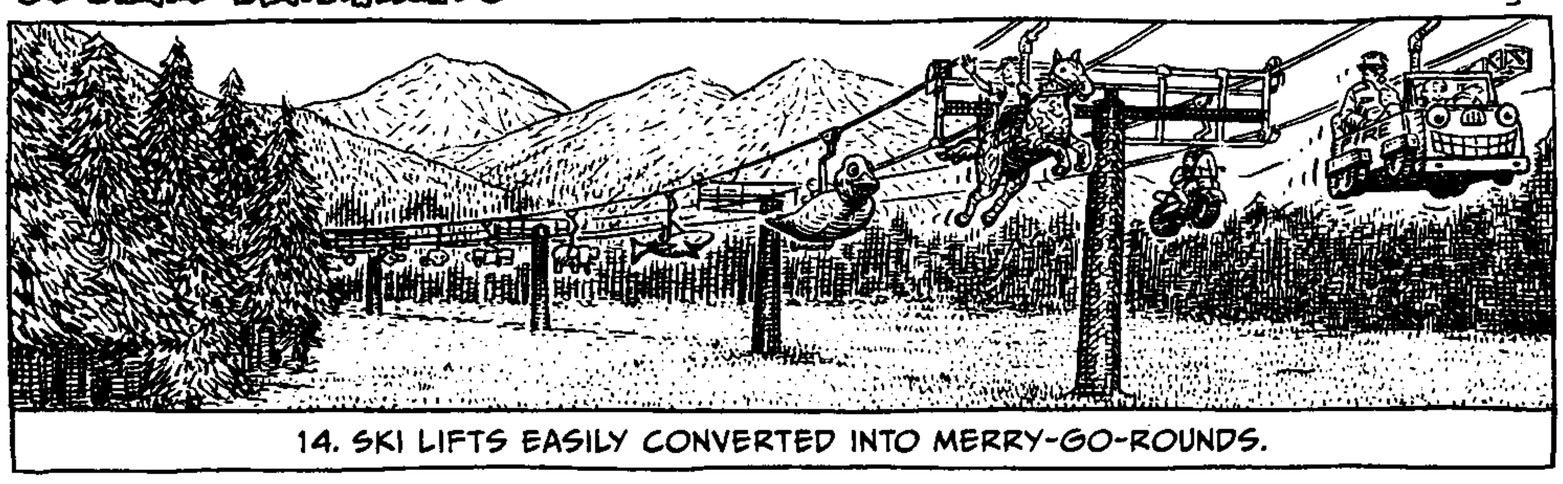
£10 paid for contributions

"If you're one of the 40,000 people without power this evening..."
Newsnight, BBC2
(Robin Petherbridge)

"We felt we needed an umbrella organisation to help flood victims."
MARY DHONAU, Sky News
(Helene Parry)

"Once you've thrown the javelin, it's out of your hands."
TESSA SANDERSON, Radio 5 Live
(Ian Metcalfe)

"A blind man was attacked by two men, one believed to be a woman."
PETER LEVY, BBC Look North
(Nicholas James Hobson)



SOLUTIONS

"Ribbands Explosives... the explosive solution" – *explosives*

"Westinghouse rail systems: innovative signalling and control solutions" – *signals*

"BPS Access Solutions – suppliers of access equipment" – *ladders*

"If English is not your first language, contact Language Solutions, Nottingham City Council" – *translations*

"Clinique New Anti-Blemish Solutions Concealing Stick" – *zit cream*

"Control Separates: The key to shopping for Anxiety Zone Solutions – support or minimize your bust, control your tummy or shape your waist, balance bust and hips" – *saggy bits*

All submitted by readers

Brooned off

Sir,

In an attempt to set myself up as the Broonites Scottish consultant, I'd like to point out that, notwithstanding the phonetic spelling inaccuracies, as a good Kirkcaldy boy, Gordon Broon's speech is not being accurately reproduced by your cartoonist. In this area, the local patois makes use of the para-linguistic suffix "eh" to punctuate the occasional sentence or clause therein.

So for example, in the first frame of that of issue no. 1189, Broon would probably more accurately say something like, "Grrr! Huv ye read this book? Ah'm no standin fur it! Nothin' but lies and slander aboot me, eh!" or in the third frame, he might say, "Ah'm gonnae sue fur defamation ae ma good name, eh."

You might also consider the substitution of fur instead of fer to indicate the English word "for" and use tae and not ta to indicate the English word "to".

As an afterthought, Broon must be one of the few remaining Kirkcaldy folk who could pronounce a word like "defamation", given it has more than two syllables, if the current populace is anything to go by.

If you need anymore help, you just have to ask!

Yours faithfully, eh,
JOHN MCNAB,

Glenrothes, Fife.

Dodgy title

Sir,

In the City (Eye 1189). Slicker seems to castigate "Lord" Eddie Davenport for having purchased his title. Reading on to the piece about cash for honours, perhaps his "lordship" is to be commended for doing so legitimately. And then in the classified section I find an advert for "Titles - Lord, Lady etc." under Eye Novelties. Perhaps Tony's cronies could have saved themselves a few quid and ensured a successful outcome to their ambitions this way.

There is another route to elevation. In Rome a few years ago I noticed that many shops around the Vatican sold Papal blessings. I duly handed over my cash and now have a splendidly garish certificate of benediction in the name of Princess Daniella, it cost about fifteen quid. Could this be a reason for the Vicar's reported intention to become the Priest? Finally, if Lord Eddie needs any more pictures of himself with royalty I am willing to pose (with or without tiara) for a small consideration.

Yours,
DAN BARRETT (HRH),

Via email.

Letter from **Dubai**

from Our Own Correspondent

WHILE our neighbours in Iraq and Gaza tear themselves apart and that looming superpower of Iran goads George Bush and his chums in the White House with threats of going nuclear, it's comforting for some that the current big issue here in Dubai is... congestion charging.

Motoring and the right to drive when, where and how we like is almost more of a religion than Islam in our sun-baked boomtown. For what has really put a bee in the igal (traditional male headdress) of locals and got up the noses of wealthy ex-pats is the new Salik system, a rudimentary version of the London congestion charge introduced in the last few weeks.

The irony is that Salik is but a modest inconvenience for the BMW/Mercedes/4x4 merchants who steam up and down the Sheikh Zayed Road in air-conditioned, tinted-glass comfort. Those genuinely hit hard are the labouring underclass who form a sizeable chunk of the population of our emirate. While cash-rich Arabs and ex-pats can easily afford the Dh4 (55p) toll (even if they pay it several times a day), for the hordes of poorly-paid Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Philippine workers it is an additional expense they can ill afford. They are already squeezed on two fronts. As the dirham is pegged to the floundering US dollar, their meagre wages buy fewer rupees when they send a proportion of income back home; and Dubai's inflation is officially running at about 12 percent with some experts putting it closer to 20 percent.

Clearing the main Dubai roads of the working riff-raff is arguably the real point of imposing Salik. Just as soaring rents force the labouring masses to live in work camps on the fringes of the city (so they are only seen when clambering up the half-built skeletal frame of yet another high-rise in 45°C temperatures) they are now not even in the peripheral vision of the motoring elite.

Our sheiks – led by Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum in Dubai, who is also vice-president of the United Arab Emirates – are hell-bent on turning our region into an economic powerhouse, with Dubai marked out as the Hong Kong/Singapore of the Middle East. Certainly Dubai is nothing if not cosmopolitan. The city has captured the atmosphere of the inter-galactic bar in the original Star Wars film. Ex-pats from around the world mix with locals in a febrile atmosphere of alcohol, sex and money.

Though under Islamic law our emirate hosts are strictly forbidden from partaking of so much as drop of the demon drink, booze is freely available in every western hotel bar – of which there is a multitude – and traditionally-dressed locals (or at least the men) often pull up a stool at, say, Ye Olde Worlde Englande Pubbe and knock back a half bottle of Johnny Walker Black with a splash of bottled mineral water (tap water is far too common).

So yes, hypocrisy is firmly at home here, but very much with western blessing. We Arabs may have sold our culture, but it was and is the Europeans, Americans and wealthy Indians who pay a high price for a piece of Dubai.

When will the bubble burst? Already we are an environmental disaster, choked daily by a combination of appalling traffic, Los Angeles-style smog and regular sand storms. Salik is a sticking plaster not so much on a carbon footprint as a gaping carbon sore. Yet the British tourists still keep flocking to our multi-star luxury hotels. And so long as western and developing world corporations and finance houses continue to reap a tax-free payday bonanza here, Dubai looks like a theme park with a long future.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Men are breast-crazy beasts," Sheikh Ezzat Attiya told viewers of his televised advice programme in Cairo, "so breastfeeding her male colleagues should give a woman a sense of safety and security, when sharing an office with men. By suckling them, she will make them feel like children, religiously and biologically. In other words, they wouldn't have any sexual feelings towards her. After breastfeeding them, the woman is allowed to remove her hijab and reveal her hair without feeling embarrassed. I suggest a minimum of five sucks for each male colleague."

Sheikh Ezzat, a controversial cleric who chairs the Department of Hadith at Al-Azhar University, insisted that his advice was fully consistent with Sharia Law. "If the woman

refuses to breastfeed her male colleague, she is religiously forbidden from sitting alone with him any longer in the office. I advise the woman to pull out one of her breasts and thrust it into the mouth of her colleague, to avoid any misunderstanding. This teaching is also binding on women at home, where the woman should expose her breast and put it in the mouth of the stranger before making him tea, in order to banish 'strange thoughts' from his mind."

Sheikh Ezzat's teachings have been greeted with widespread dismay and ridicule throughout the Middle East. "Simple-mindedness is a word that springs to mind," declared journalist Salama Ahmed Salama. "Such absurd and trivial fatwahs (religious edicts) tarnish the image of Islam at a time when it has come under intense scrutiny from the West, and they are even becoming a dubious source of income for some scholars. Sad to say, disseminating fatwahs has become a profitable business, like entertainment competitions." *(The Egyptian Gazette, 27/5/07. Spotter: Anon)*

– ● –

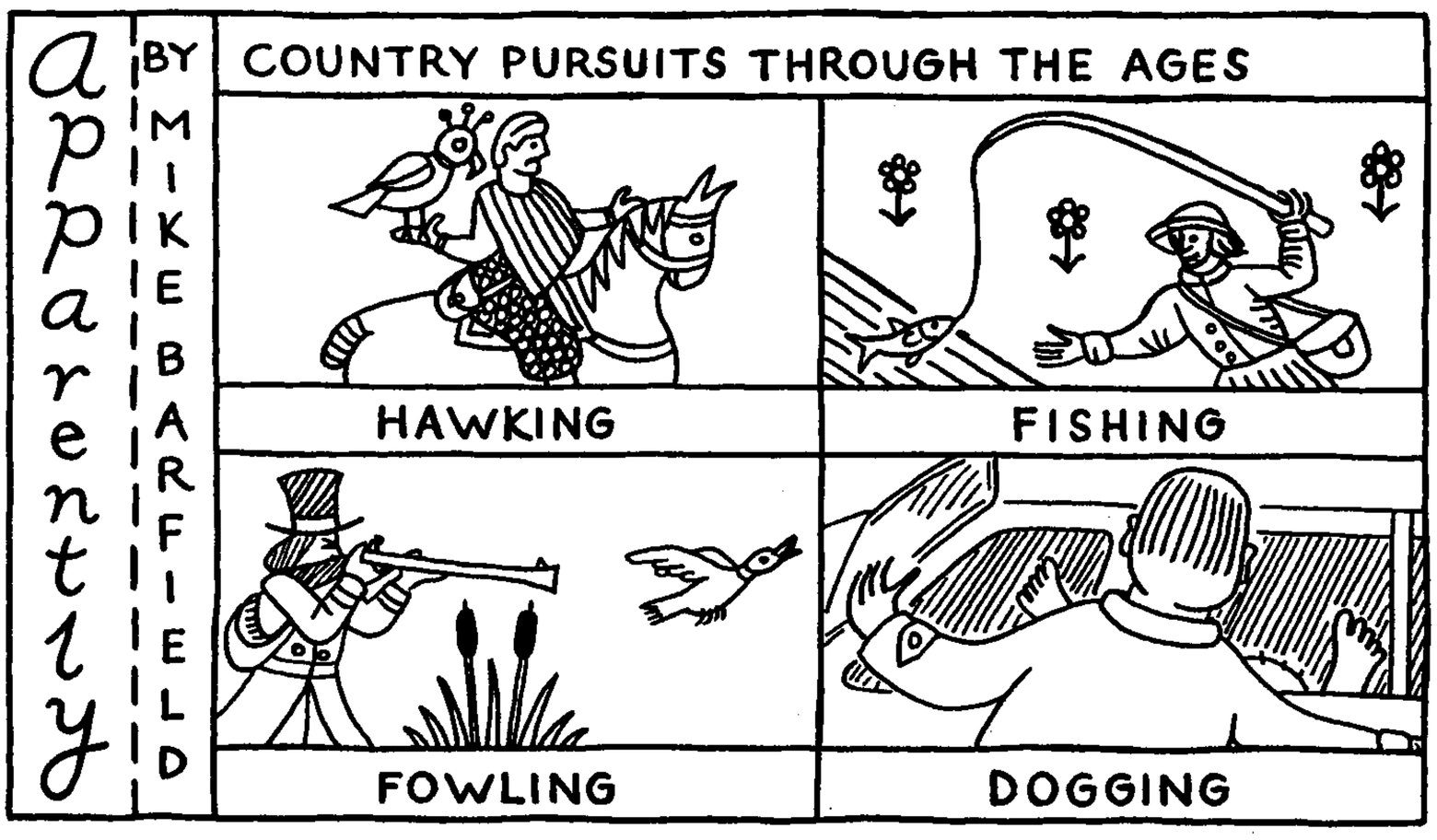
● *"Want free baseball tickets to see the Milwaukee Brewers? Then all you have to do is show up on Tuesday May 8 at Miller Park stadium (northeast corner of ballpark, near Friday's) between 7:00am and 3:00pm, for a rectal examination.*

"All men who agree to have their prostate checked will receive two free tickets to a future Milwaukee Brewers game. No appointment necessary. All rectal examinations are free and confidential. Sponsored by Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin." (Milwaukee Brewers web site and USA Today, 9/5/07 Spotter: James Cox)

– ● –

● "Our faith tells us that we must perform our last rites in a particular way," Vinod Kumar Agarwal told a press conference in New Delhi, "and I do not wish to challenge tradition. Hindus believe that burning the body helps to release the soul, in a cycle of reincarnation that leads ultimately to enlightenment, but we must consider the consequences of our actions. According to United Nations figures, almost ten million Hindus are cremated on traditional wooden pyres each year. Each pyre uses up to 600 kgs of firewood, leading to the felling of 50 million trees annually. The fires produce eight million tonnes of carbon dioxide that adds to global warming, while the half-million tonnes of ashes end up in the rivers, causing massive pollution. So like it or not, we Hindus must modernise our funeral rites."

Agarwal then demonstrated his Mokshda Green Cremation System, which reduces carbon emissions by over 60%. "In 1993, I designed my first ecologically-friendly pyre, a raised human-sized brazier under a roof, with slats that could be lowered to maintain heat. But nobody would use it, so I realised then that I had to get religion on my side. Consultations with priests, environmentalists and government officials have led to my new design, which has marble flooring and a statue of the god Shiva, but uses only 150 kgs of wood, and causes no air pollution. My company has already installed 41 pyres, and we are in discussions with a UK-based carbon broker, to see if our pyres can deliver carbon credits. And best of all, because our pyres use much less wood, we will no longer see poor families tipping partially-burned bodies into the river, because they could not afford enough fuel." *(The Hindu, 15/5/07. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*



Duchess of Tears

by DAME SYLVIE KRIN, author of *Love In The Saddle, Born To Be Queen, Heir of Sorrows, etc etc.*

THE STORY SO FAR: Charles and Camilla are visiting the Gloucestershire village of Trelford-under-Water to see for themselves the extent of recent flood damage.

Now read on...

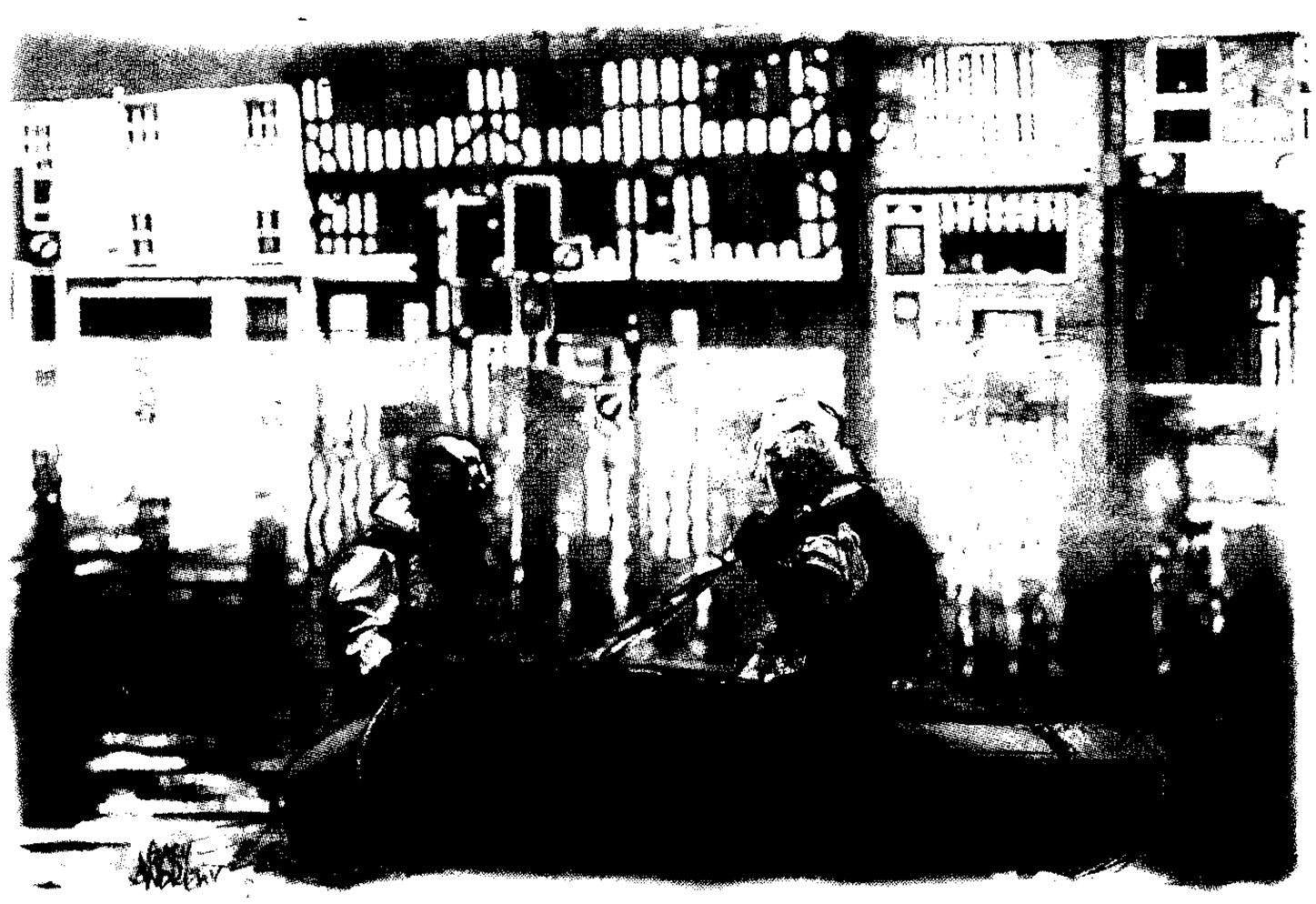
"IT REALLY is appalling!" Charles peered from the bow of the Royal Dinghy *Britannia* and pointed to the spire of St Levy's church, just visible above the swirling flood. Overhead a helicopter hovered, lifting two stranded pensioners and a sheep to safety

"And look, Camilla! Over there! Look at those people sitting on that rooftop. Wave to them, darling! It'll mean a lot to them."

Struggling unsuccessfully to open her multi-coloured golfing umbrella (a present from Mr Abdul Hatterji, proprietor of the Jet Service Station and 24-Hour Mini-Mart at Stroud), Camilla obligingly waved a gloved hand towards the unfortunate looters.

"There, you see!" beamed Charles triumphantly. "They're giving you the V-sign. It's just like the war when Grandfather visited the East End after the bombing."

"This umbrella's useless," Camilla moaned, hurling the brolly in a fit of frustration into the rising tide and watching it as it was swept away. "No wonder they're giving them away free."



But Charles seemed oblivious to her discomfort. "I know it's really ghastly for everyone to be flooded and see all their furniture swept away. But, on the other hand, this sort of thing really brings out the best in the British nation."

WITHIN minutes Charles and Camilla reached their destination – an improvised pontoon tethered to the forecourt of the local Tesco where a vast group of newsmen and photographers were waiting. Film crews clung to treetops, their cameras precariously balanced on the broken branches.

"Leave this to me, old thing," Charles whispered to Camilla as they waded towards the waiting microphones. "You see, they'll want me to say something to boost morale. It's expected of one."

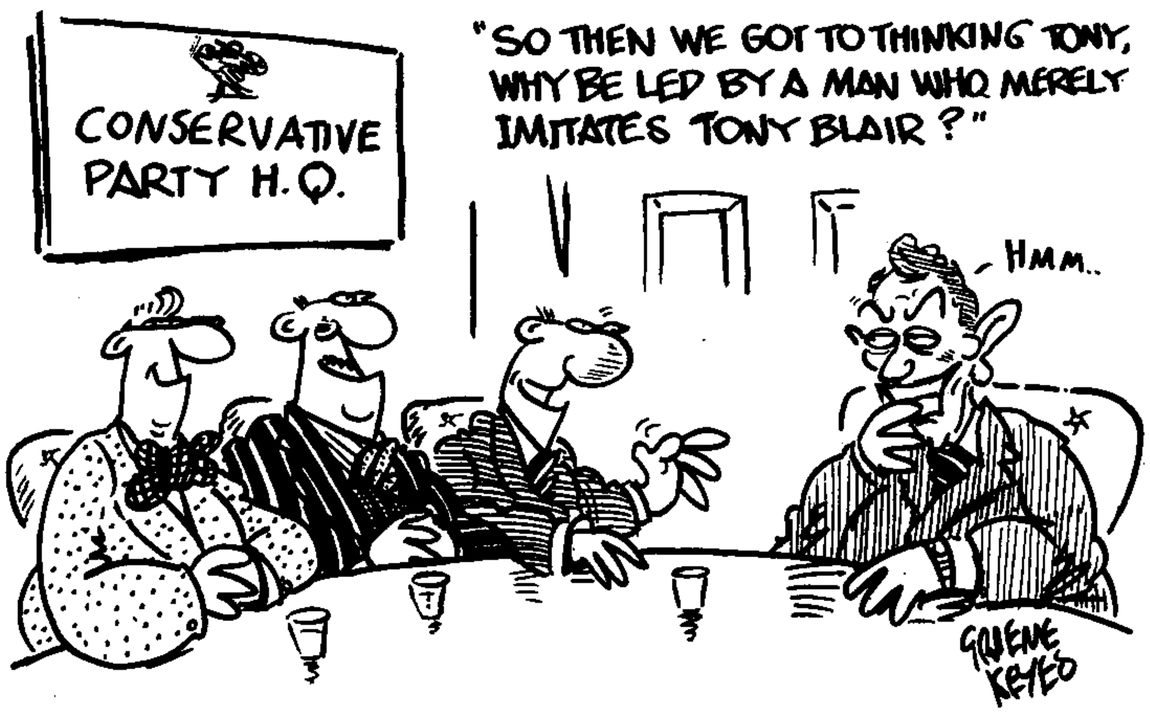
"Gentlemen," he began. "This flood thingy. It really is appalling..." But he could get no further as the throng of newsmen pressed towards Camilla, thrusting their microphones towards her perfectly formed lips.

"Over here, Cammy!" shouted the rubicund-featured Bill Grozzer, the *Daily Telegraph*'s highly respected Court Correspondent. "This big 10th anniversary service for the People's Princess – are you going to go, love? Or are you afraid of being booed off the stage?"

Charles watched in horror as question followed question like shafts of poisoned darts and Camilla struggled like a wounded deer to defend herself.

"I... er..." she stuttered in vain. But her faltering response was lost in a tumultuous clap of thunder and the heavens opened yet again.

● Download the GnomeAudio version of this Sylvie Krin story read by Dame Judi Dench from our website – www.gnometrash.co.uk.



2007/428 6 July 2007

Assembly calls on Mayor for more rubbish advice

London Assembly press release

The Harlow Deaf Association's new club, at Barn Mead Pavilion in Goldsmiths off Partridge Road, runs from 7-11pm and is aimed at the estimated 50-plus profoundly dead people in Harlow as well as those suffering from less severe hearing problems

Harlow Star

STUNT MAN HAS FATAL ACCIDENT

by Our Political Staff **Peter O'Bore**

BRITAIN'S best known stunt man, Dave Cameron, 31, got the surprise of his life yesterday when his latest stunt went tragically haywire.

Thousands of people in the Oxfordshire town of Withey-under-Water were waiting eagerly on their rooftops to see Daredevil Dave setting out to walk single-handedly down the length of the flooded town's High Street while simultaneously being filmed by a number of TV crews.

Instead the bewildered stunt man suddenly found himself sitting in a clearing in the African jungle.

Houdini He?

A puzzled group of natives came across the mysterious white man, clad only in a three-piece suit and Old Etonian tie, and politely invited him to give a talk to a local women's group on the need for more grammar schools to promote increased social mobility in Central Africa.

Playing the Blane game

This is only the latest of Daredevil Dave's legendary stunts to go wrong.

- **He set out on a death-defying bid to ride a bicycle from Notting Hill to to Westminster through the horrific London traffic, but eventually had to be rescued by his chauffeur who was driving a few yards behind.**
- **He tried to erect a planet-saving mini wind turbine on the chimney of his West London home only for local planning officials to order him down from the rooftop as his stunt had become a safety hazard.**

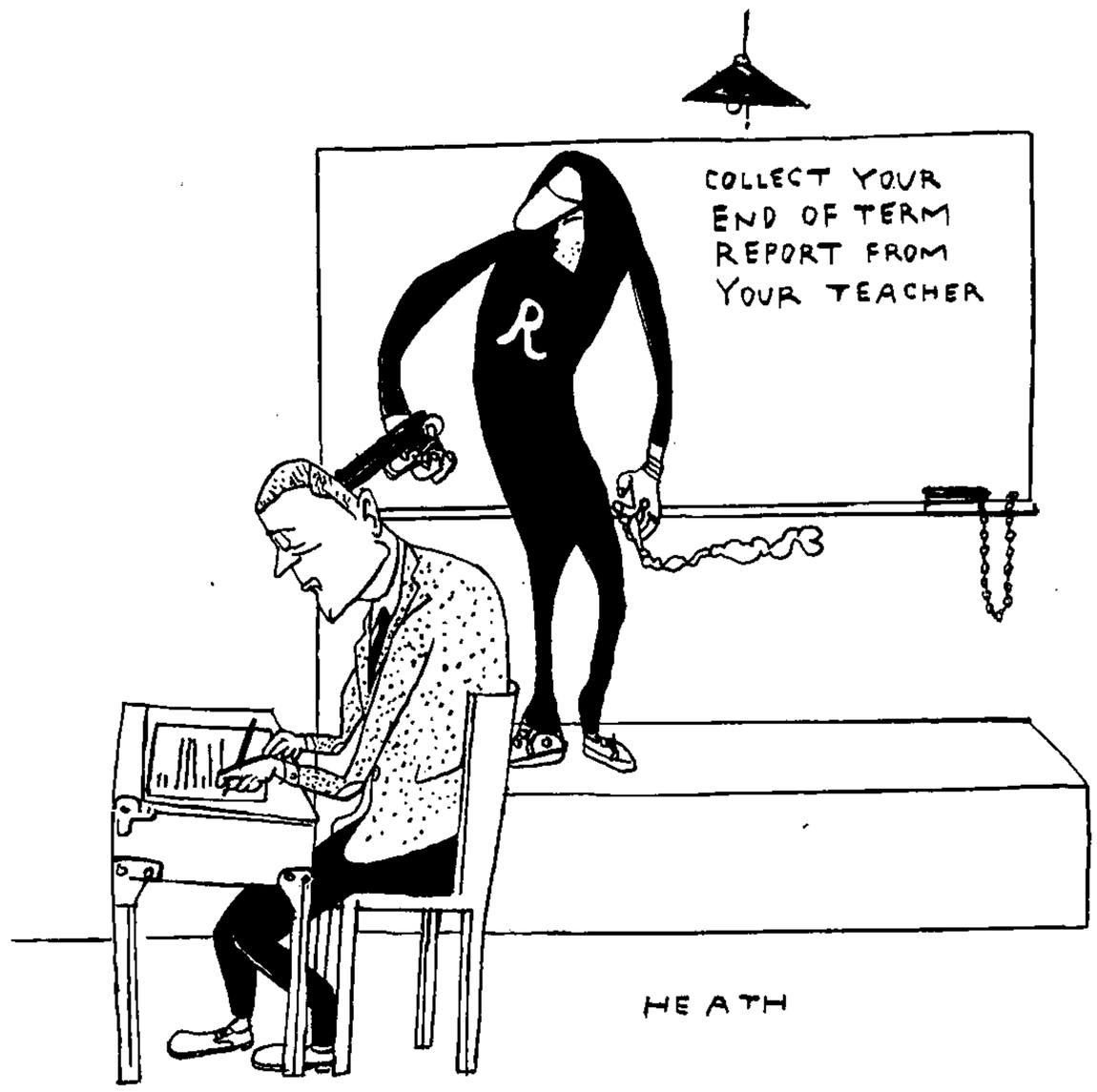
- **He once attempted to embrace a menacing 'hoodie' in the street, only to find that bystanders, instead of applauding his courage, fell about laughing.**
- **Only recently Dave made no fewer than five visits to the terrifying Indian village of Southall, in a heroic bid to find someone who would vote Conservative – but this stunt too horribly backfired.**

All this adds up to a bleak future for the man once hailed as the leader of the Tory Party.

STOP PRESS

Henley Man Flees Floods

A RESIDENT of the town of Henley-under-Thames, Mr Boris Johnson, 56, yesterday became the latest victim of the killer floods which have engulfed large parts of Oxfordshire when he flew off for a two-week holiday in the sun with his wife and children.



"Your son is a credit to the school, and has a 100% attendance record"

HALF THE CABINET ADMITS 'YES, WE DID TRY SOCIALISM'

by Our Political Staff **Mary Juana and Harry Pot**

FOLLOWING the admission of Home Secretary Jacqui Smith that she had "experimented with left-wing politics" while at university, seven of her fellow Cabinet ministers rushed to confess that they had done the same.

Said one minister, Ruth Kelly, "It was just something everyone did in the '70s. I can remember going to these parties where everyone was wearing CND badges and quoting from Paul Foot's latest column in the *Socialist Worker*.

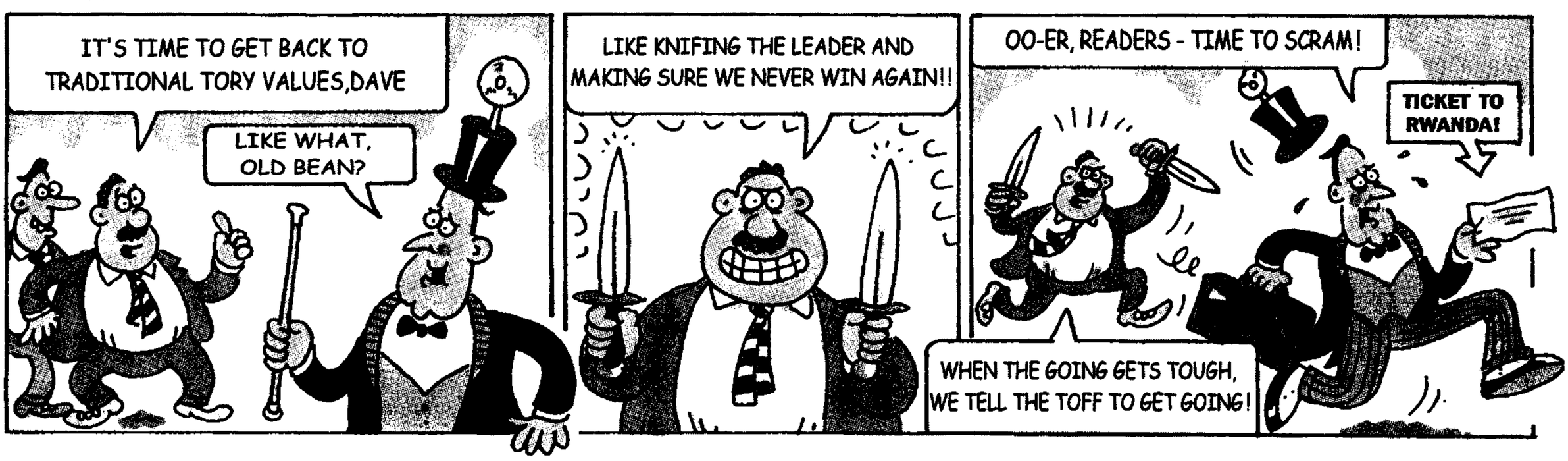
"I don't mind admitting that I did it quite a few times," she went on, "and it did give me a bit of a buzz. But I wasn't an addict – no way."

Keep Off The Grass

Said another senior Cabinet minister, Alistair Darling, "Socialism was quite harmless, in my view. A lot of us were into it in those days. But when we all came down from University and met Tony Blair, we realised that we didn't need it any more."

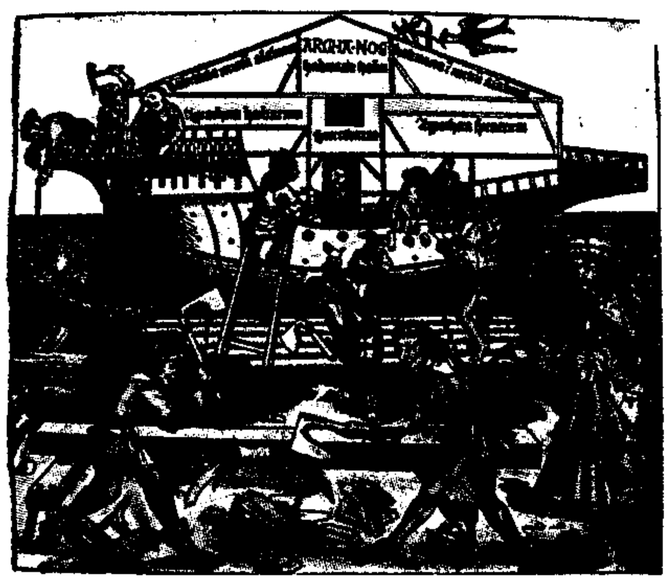
- Did you smoke socialism at university? If so, we'd like to hear from you. And so would PC Yates, now that he's got nothing better to do with his time. Text or email us at www.dailytelegrass.co.uk

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


IT'S TIME TO GET BACK TO TRADITIONAL TORY VALUES,DAVE
LIKE WHAT, OLD BEAN?
LIKE KNIFING THE LEADER AND MAKING SURE WE NEVER WIN AGAIN!!
OO-ER, READERS - TIME TO SCRAM!
TICKET TO RWANDA!
WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, WE TELL THE TOFF TO GET GOING!

2 Shekels **NOAHS OF THE WORLD**

FLOODS – 'ALL GOD'S FAULT' SAY CHILDREN OF ISRAEL



from Our Man On The Ark ***G. RAAF***

AS rain beat down for the 40th day running, millions of home-owners saw their properties finally vanishing below what they were calling "the worst floods since the world began".

One question was going up on every side as angry drownees were engulfed by the fast-rising waters – "Why, oh why were we not given proper warning of this disaster so that we could have taken proper life-saving precautions?

"We blame God for failing to alert us to this deluge, which is now covering the earth to a depth of 36 cubits."

However, a spokesman for the Almighty was quick to point out that He had given plenty of warnings, and that the only person who had heeded them was the world-famous ecologist Mr Noah.

Ham & High Ground

Mr Noah, 912, told drowning newsmen last night that he had been predicting the rising water level for over one hundred years.

"Anyone," he said, "could have done what I did – namely build an Ark and fill it with two members of every species of creature, so that biodiversity can be preserved in a post-flood situation."

● Why, oh why do you think the entire human race seems to have built its homes on a flood plain, except Noah? We'd like to hear from you, via raven or dove.

HELLO. My name Serfina from Grotsk. Mrs Polly and useless Simon go holiday in Dubai or "You Buy" as Mrs Polly say but I no understand joke?

So Mrs Polly leave me big list things to do.

1. Wash useless Simon underpants – remember not in microwave, stupid girl.

2. Don't eat everything in fridge or cupboard or you go back to Grotsk eat potato see how you like that.

3. Write column for newspaper. Easy peasy. No take long.

4. Sit in room feel homesick and cry. No, just joke says Mrs Polly!

5. Look after toddler Charlie. he too young go Dubai. Much better he stay here and annoy you. Take him Harry Potter film – which Serfina do every day!!

6. Pack bags and clean out room ready to be sacked when Mrs Polly return in bad mood because useless Simon spend whole holiday watching Pro-Celebrity Dwarf Camel Racing from Abu Dhabi with James May on Al Jazeera Extreme Sport 3.

So I must go now, Charlie pretend be wizard and set fire to hamster!?!

Gudbye!

© Serfina Svetshopski pp Polly Filler 2007.

WETTEST SINCE RECORDS BEGAN

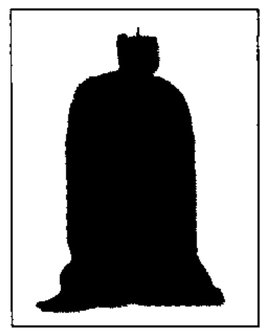
by Our Westminster Correspondent
Michael Trenchfoot

SENIOR Tories have announced that a disaster-prone June and July has confirmed that David Cameron is officially the wettest leader of the party since records began in 1752.

The young wildebeest's first migration is always a great trial to its parents

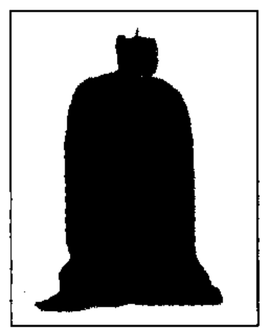
10 BEST BUYS SANDBAGS

1. 'Homedry'



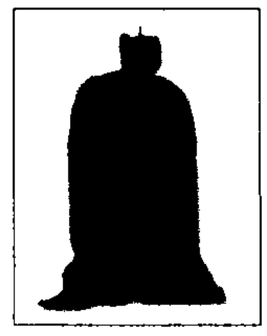
This basic, easy-to-handle bag, weighing 24.32 kilograms, won the Environment Agency's 2006 'Sandbag of the Year' award. **Price: £10.99**

2. 'Blitz Spirit'



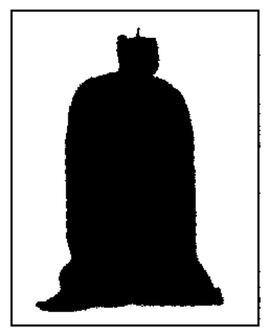
This World War Two model is an exact reproduction of the sandbags used by Dad's Army to hold back Hitler's hordes. **Price: Half-a-Crown (2/6)**

3. 'Greensand'



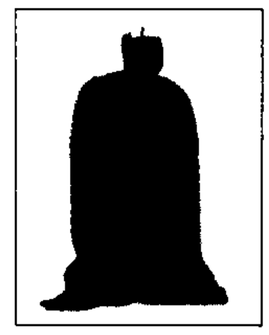
This eco-friendly sandbag, woven from sustainable palm fronds, is filled with Fairtrade sand from the Sahara Desert. Recommended by Greenpeace and Friends of Sand.
Price: £25.99

4. 'The Royal Sandringham'



This luxurious sandholder comes with a five-year guarantee from the Duchy of Cornwall. Will withstand tsunami-style floods for up to 15 years. **Price: £250**

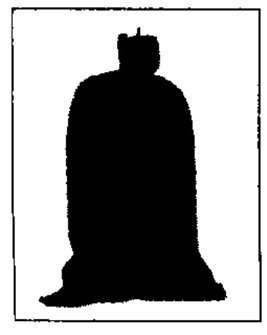
5. 'Just-A-Bag'



Best of the economy range, this fill-your-own bag is made from recycled copies of the *Daily Telegraph*. The makers say, "What you see is what you get. This is a no-frills bag. All you have to do is fill it with sand."

★ **Eye Best Buy Price: 3p for 1000** ★

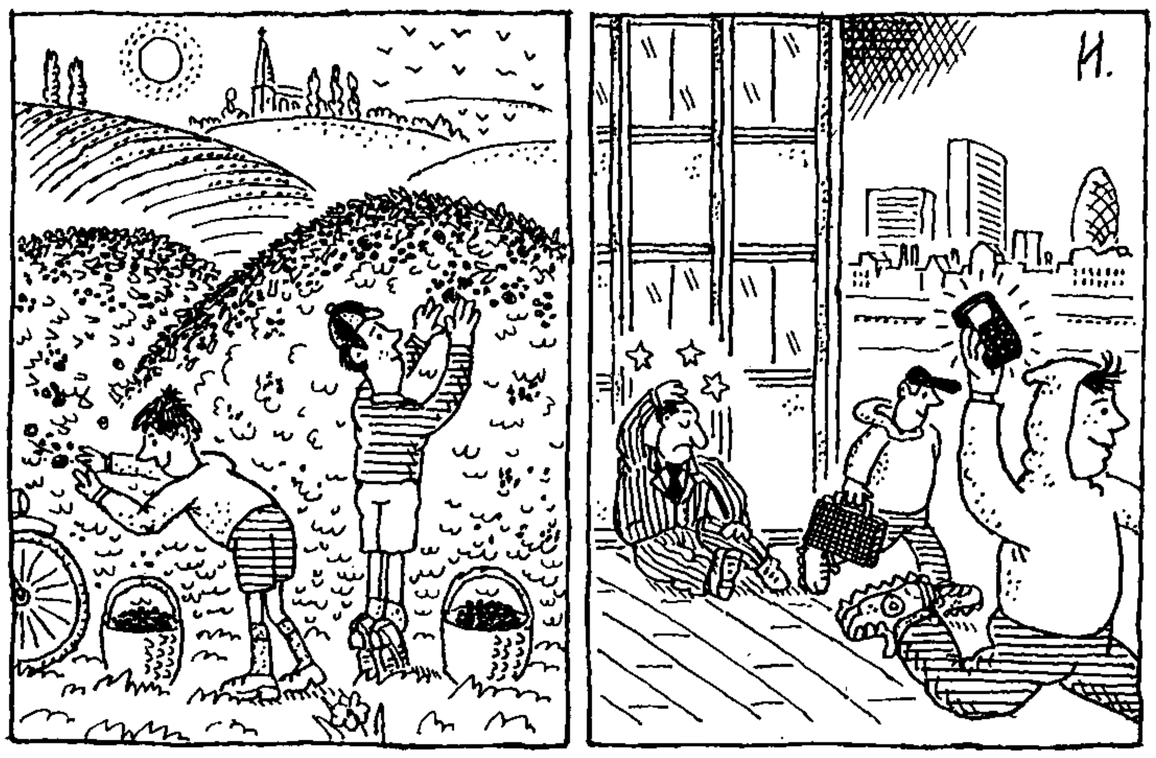
6. 'La Serenissima'



As used for centuries by rich Venetians to protect their palazzos, this classic Renaissance design has been given a modern twist by top Italian designer Sandi Bagatti. *Made from* porous ground coral, the bag absorbs water for up to 20 minutes before dissolving in a sustainable manner and floating away.
Price £1,250

(That's enough sandbags. Ed.)

Full list of stockists p. 94



MR GORDON BROWN
An Apology

IN RECENT months, in common with all other newspapers, we may have given our readers the idea that Mr Gordon Brown was totally unfitted to become the Prime Minister in succession to Mr Blair. Headlines such as "Dour Gordie is a Charisma-Free Zone", "Is Labour About To Make A Terrible Mistake?" and "With Boring Brown, Dave Will Walk The Next Election" may have conveyed the impression that we regarded Mr Brown as a grumpy, unimaginative Scottish loser whose premiership was doomed before it had even started.

We now recognise that there was not a jot or scintilla of truth in any of the above allegations, and would like to make it clear that Mr Brown's first weeks in office have been an unalloyed triumph, proving that he is a statesman of the first rank, whose honesty and sense of purpose shine out in dazzling contrast to the tawdry and meretricious duplicity of his predecessor. We have no hesitation in offering Mr Brown our sincere aplogies for any distress he may have been caused by our earlier reports.

© All newspapers.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Mike Reid

So. Farewell
Then Mike
Reid.

Comedian and
Star of
EastEnders.

I just heard
On the radio
That you had
Died of a
Massive heart
Attack.

"I don't
Believe I'm
Hearing this.

Is the catchphrase
You would have
Used if you were
Me.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

Must Old Bull Die?

by Our Lib Dem Staff
Lemsip Opec

A SMALL group of devout Lib Dems were fighting yesterday to preserve the life of their revered sacred bull, 'Ming Shambles'.

At the age of 107, Ming is the world's oldest living holy cow. There have recently been calls for him to be put down on account of his advanced age and uselessness.

But there is now hope of a temporary reprieve following demonstrations of popular support for the animal in Southall and Sedgefield.

● **Full story p.94**

DYING MAN FILMED FOR TV

SHOCKING news emerged last night when it was revealed that a broadcaster would continue with its plan to show a man dying on television.

A critic of the move said, "I for one am appalled that ITV1 continued to show News Knight with Trevor MacDonald – the very least they could do was to let this man die with some dignity in a non-broadcast pilot."

THE BROON-ITES
THE CLEVER CELTS WHO'RE CANNY IN A CRISIS!
GORDON AND HILARY WEDGWOOD-BROON ARE OOT AN' ABOOT VISITIN' THA' UNDERWATER VILLAGE OF HELPMABOAB-UNDER-THA'-LOCH...
THAT LOOKS A GUID HOOSE!
CRIVVENS! LOOK AT THEM FLOATIN'!
HENRY DAVIES
EXCUSE ME HEN, YOU WOULDNA MIND IF US TWA STAN' IN FRONT OF YER HOOSE AN' LOOK CONCERNED FOR A WEE WHILE?
ERM... DINNAE FASH YERSELF! BE OOR GUEST!
BUS STOP
THAT WIZ GUID! RIGHT, LET'S AWA AND FIND SOME MAIR SOGGY HOOSES!
JINGS! HIS POLL RATINGS MUST BE BONNIER THAN I KEN, IF HE'S ABLE TO WALK ON THA' WATER!
I KNEW JACQUI SMITH'S AULD STASH OF GANJA WOULD COME IN HANDY SOMETIME!
YE CAN SAY THAT AGAIN GORDON! HOOTS MON!
HERE, HAVE ANITHER PUFF A' MA WEE PIPE!

END OF THE STORY WHICH GRIPPED THE WORLD

'WE NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD END LIKE THAT' say fans

by Our Waterstones Staff **Lunchtime O'Queues**

MILLIONS of fans gasped in amazement yesterday at the unexpected denouement to one of the world's longest-running and most popular sagas, "Tony Blair and the Deathly Honours List".

For months there had been intense speculation as to whether the hero of the story, Harry Blair, could possibly escape, as the forces of darkness closed in around him and his two faithful companions, Lord Weasley and Ruthie Turner.

As the long-drawn out story neared its gripping climax, it seemed the trio was finally doomed.

JK Rowlinginit

At any minute the menacing figure of Knackermort would emerge from the shadows to clamp the handcuffs on their trembling wrists and intone the fateful words, "I am arresting you in the name of the law for a prima facie breach of the Sale of Honours Act 1925."

The evidence against the trio appeared overwhelming.

Millions of pounds had been handed over by a mysterious group of entrepreneurs who had then been nominated for the highest honours in the land.

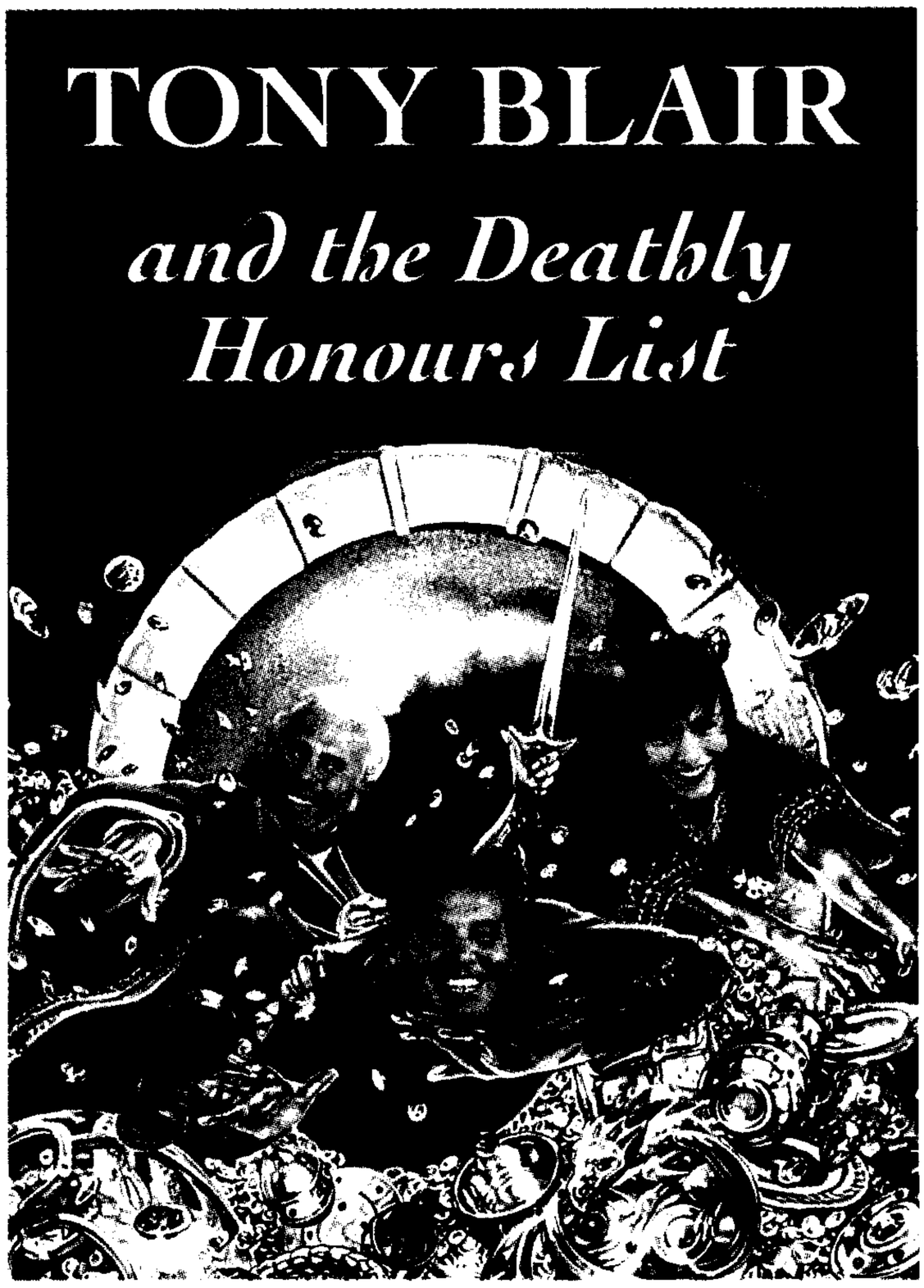
Knackermort was exultant. At last he was on the verge of victory in the battle which had absorbed all his energies for so long.

Harry, While Potters Last

But, just as the trap was about to be sprung, a hitherto unknown young lady from the Crown Prosecution Service, a Ms Dowdy, who no-one had even heard of before, popped up to announce that, after all, no charges would be levelled.

Were you disappointed by the way the story ended? We were! So was everybody else! In fact we think its a bloody outrage! Leading us on like that for all those months, and then they get let off scot-free!

Did you see that Lord Levy talking to the press afterwards, grinning all over his face and thanking his wife and kids for standing by him when he was obviously guilty? D'you know what I'd do, guv, string him up, it's the only language people like him understand.



The book no one is talking about, exclusively serialised in Private Eye

UNSUNG HEROES

by the Rt Hon Gordon Brown

No 94. The boy from Kirkcaldy

He was a humble young British person, born in the humble town of Kirkcaldy, where he went to a humble village school, the motto of which was "Try, try and try again, and one day you'll get the job you want."

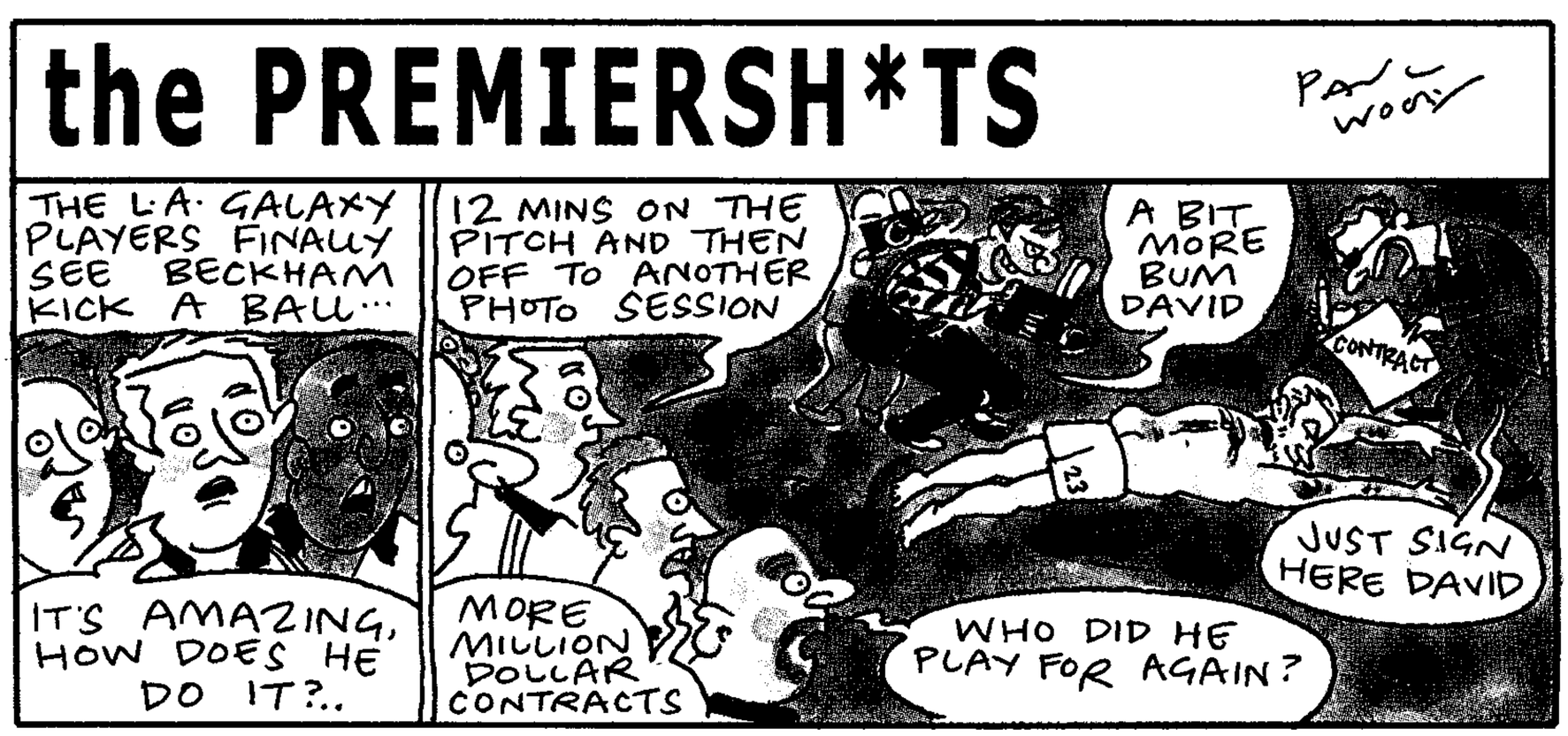
When he was older he befriended a younger man from a more privileged background, who, over a simple meal in a humble Islington restaurant, promised him, with his hand on his heart, that one day our humble hero would get the recognition he deserved.

But as year followed year it seemed as if his dream was further away than ever.

But did he give up, as so many ordinary mortals might have done? No, he was so selfless, so dedicated and so determined that he toiled on at his humble task, letting his rich young friend take all the limelight and the credit.

If he felt envy he didn't show it. Whereas lesser men might have felt bitter, he always managed to greet everyone with a snarl *(surely 'smile'? Ed.)*

But at long last, this supreme example of an unsung hero stepped from the shadows into his rightful *(cont. p. 94)*.


the PREMIERSH*TS
PAUL WOOD
THE L.A. GALAXY PLAYERS FINALLY SEE BECKHAM KICK A BALL...
IT'S AMAZING, HOW DOES HE DO IT?..
12 MINS ON THE PITCH AND THEN OFF TO ANOTHER PHOTO SESSION
MORE MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACTS
A BIT MORE BUM DAVID
CONTRACT
23
JUST SIGN HERE DAVID
WHO DID HE PLAY FOR AGAIN?

WHY HOMER SIMPSON IS A SAINT FOR OUR TIMES

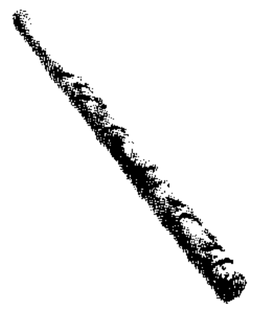
by the Rev. A. N. Wislon

At first sight, it might seem odd to suggest that the new Homer Simpson film is a more important religious document than the Bible.

But, you know, in a very real sense *(cont. p.94)*

HARRY POTTER FACT FILE

Over 80 million copies of the latest Harry Potter book are being sold every second of the day.



The queue in Beijing for the new Harry Potter book was so long it could be seen from the moon.

Dumbledore is an anagram of Voldemort.

Daniel Radcliffe's glasses have been insured for $27 million.

If Hagrid were to wear Marks and Spencer chinos he would be an incredible size 94 (European 317).

The character of Proffessor Severus Snape is based on a real life academic – Professor David Starkey!

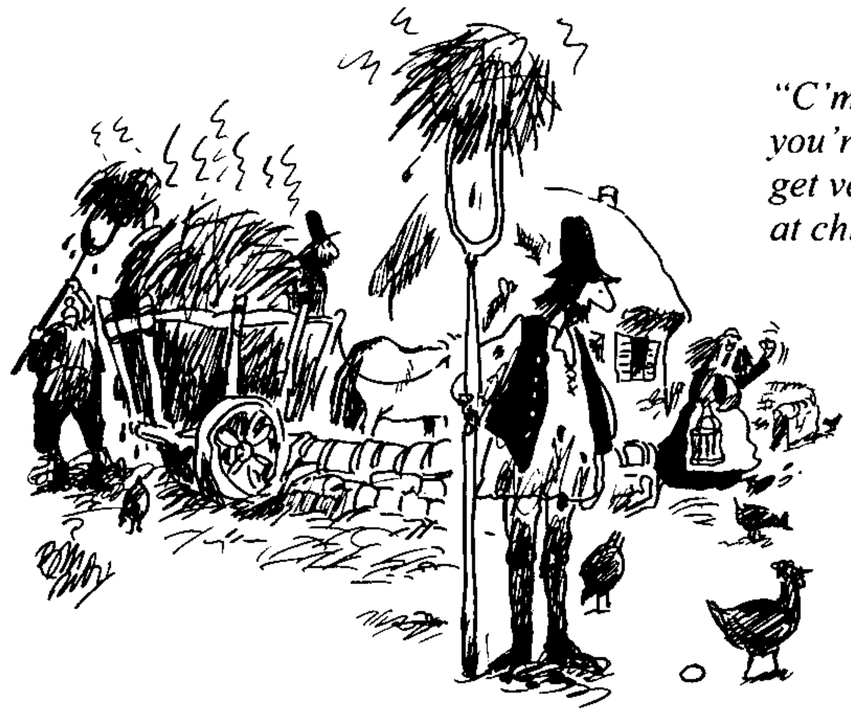
Harry Potter's favourite film is Lord of the Rings.

The word "Muggle' comes from the Anglo-Saxon word "Muglõr" meaning "Trouserpress".

Alastair Campell records in his diary seeing Prime Minister Tony Blair reading Harry Potter out loud to President George Bush – wearing only yellow and green underpants.

In the final book Hermione is revealed as a direct descendant of Mary Magdalen with a divine bloodline preserved by the Order of the Merovingian Pheonix and the Brotherhood of the Priory of Opus Sesame.

More than 11,000 Harry Potter Fact Files are published in newspapers every day in a desperate attempt to fill up space and cash in on
(That's enough Potter facts, Ed.)



"C'mon, Fabergé, you're not going to get very far staring at chicken's arses"

NO EVIDENCE POPE CATHOLIC

Crown Prosecution Shock Conclusion

by Our Cash For Honours Staff LORD HELPUS

AFTER A 2000-year, £8 billion investigation, the Crown Prosecution Service has decided that there is insufficient evidence to prove that the Supreme Pontiff is a practising Catholic.

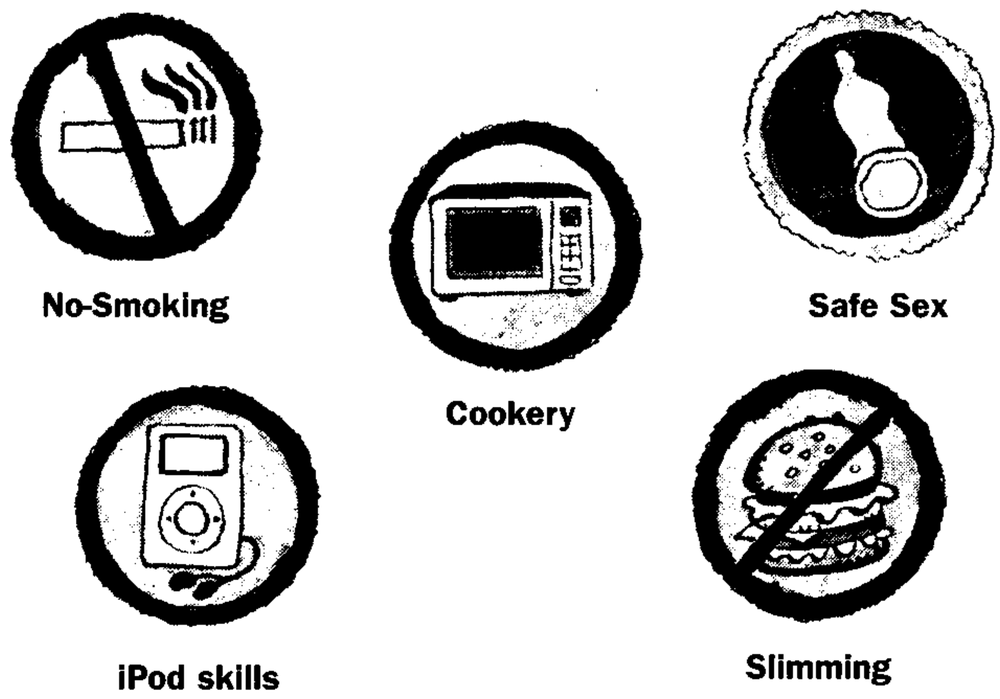
The police chief leading the inquiry said, "Of course I am disappointed after all the work we put into this investigation.

"Many of those interviewed told me that they believed the Pope to be a Catholic and the documentation we amassed certainly indicated Catholic tendencies, but at the end of the day I have to accept that the Prime Minister is innocent."

LATE NEWS

■ CPS abandons 'Bears Shit In Woods' Probe

Those new Girl Guide badges in full – what you will see



'In many countries, perople are more comfortable writing English than speaking it'

Jeffrey Mann

Financial Times

BLAIRS HONOURS LIST LEAKED

Private Eye Exclusive

by Our Honours Staff **Lunchtime O'BEs**

A COPY of Tony Blair's Resignation Honours list has been exclusively leaked to Private Eye.

THOSE BLAIR HONOURS IN FULL:

Life Peerages

Lord Dodgy of Dossier (formerly spin doctor Alistair Campbell).

The Earl of Cashpoint (formerly Lord Levy, party fundraiser and onetime manager of Mr Alvin Stardust).

Baroness Kirsty Young for services to making documentaries about Mrs Blair.

Earl Richard of Barbados (formerly Sir Cliff Richard, popular singer) for the use of his house during the summer holidays.

Lord Mandelson of Old Compton Street, for lifelong services to the resignation industry.

Baron Desmond of Filth, proprietor of the Daily Express, for services to supporting the invasion of Iraq.

Lord Bonio of Pedigree Chum for services to the global warming, poverty and dog biscuit industries.

Lord Boomtown of Rat (formerly popular singer Bob Geldof), *see above.*

Lord Gibb of Miami Beach services to the provision of Freebies.

An honorary Marquessate is given to Mr Silvio Berlusconi, the head of the mafia (*Is this right? Ed*), in exchange for 25 Rolex watches, five free holidays and a souvenir bandana inscribed with the legend "You lika my sister, big boy?"

Would you like an honour? Or do you think the whole system has become discredited? We'd like to hear from you on www.fillourpages.telegraph.co.uk

TORIES CALL FOR ARMY TASK FORCE

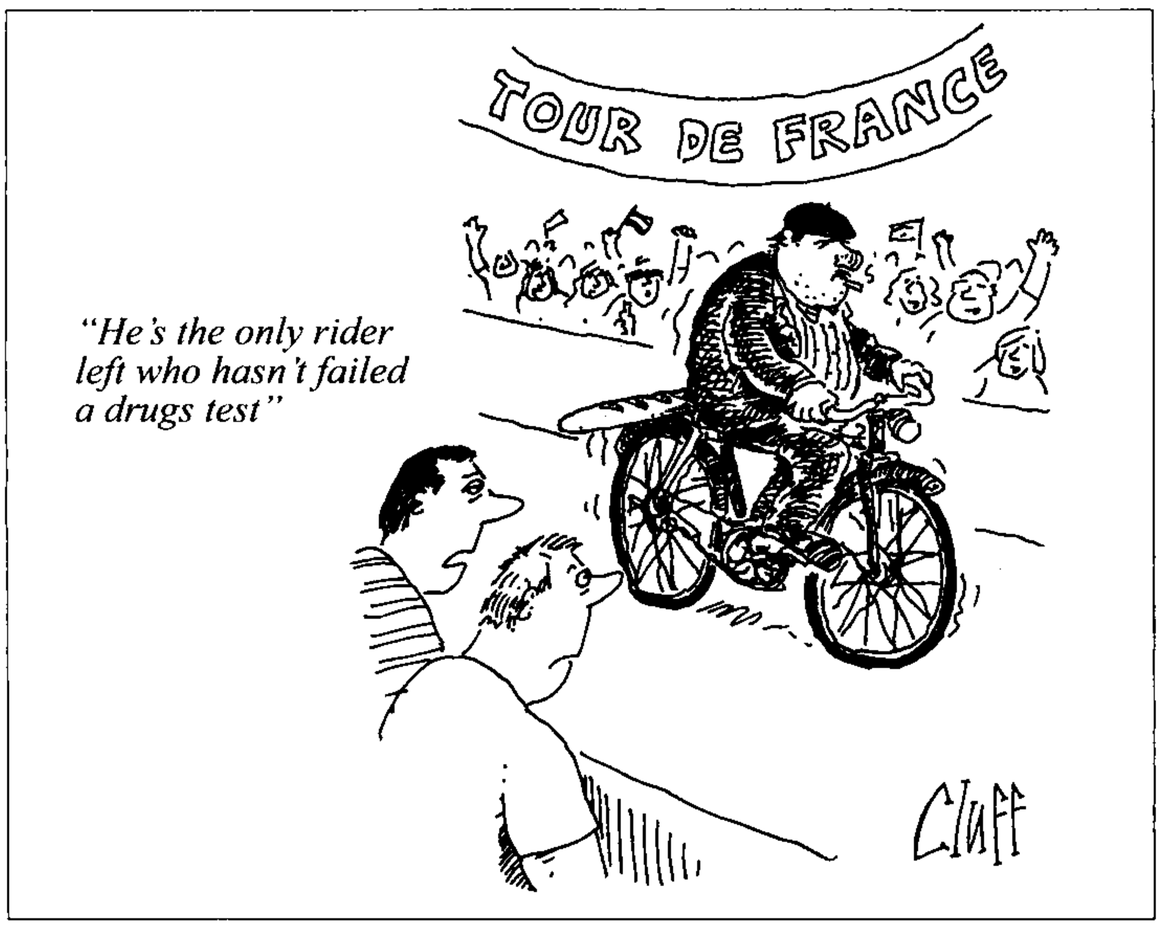
by Our Floods Staff **Keith Underwaterhouse**

UNKNOWN Tory spokesperson, Ms Caroline Spellcheck, 47, today came up with a dazzling new idea to get the Tories back into the news.

"These awful floods," she began in a high fluting voice, "why doesn't the army have a specially trained force on permanent standby, ready to step in to rescue people whenever their cats get stuck up a tree?

"I have a name for this force," she went on, "it could be called the 'fire brigade'."

Full story and pictures p.94



Advertisement

FROM 20th CENTURY FOX, SKY ETC.

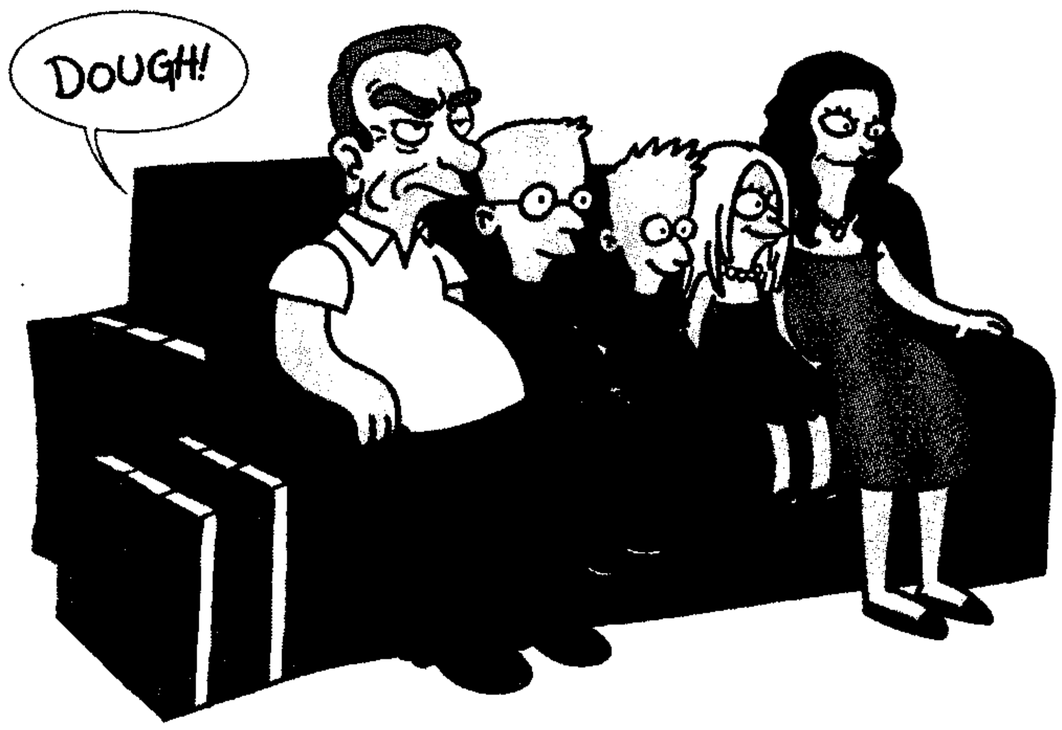
At last it's here!

America's hilarious Dysfunctional Family comes to a screen near you!

Yes it's...

THE MURDOCHS

They're taking over the world!

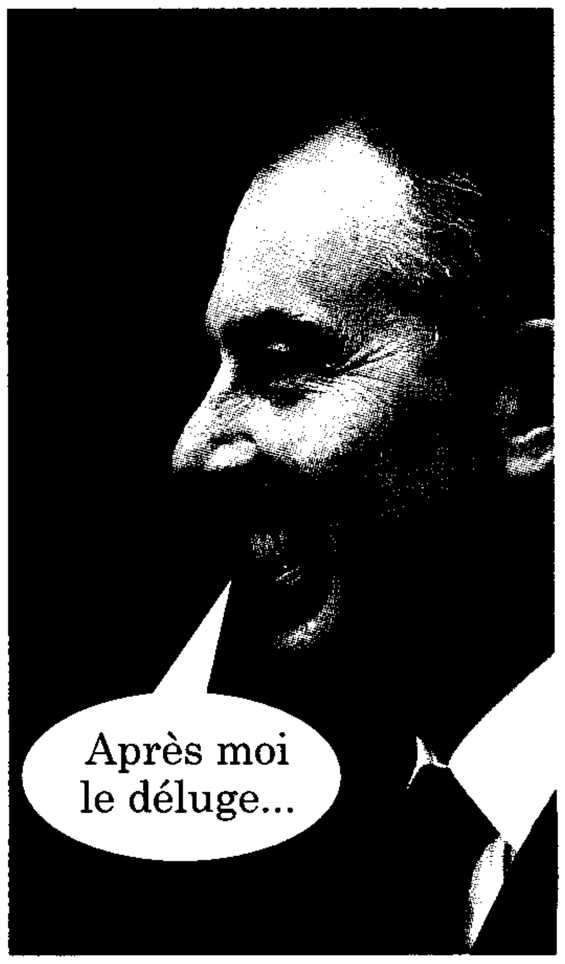


Rupert, Wendy, James, Lachlan, Liz and the other ones.

Everyone loves the Murdochs with their desire to dumb down the entire planet and ruin everything.

The Sun (surely 'Fun') starts when Rupert falls in love with a pig and makes her editor – triggering an environmental disaster as the world is filled with filth. Will Rupert make amends? No – but he will make lots of money! And will his bickering family prove to be as disastrous as their old man? Yes!

DE GAULLE REVISITED



Exclusive to all papers

18-YEAR-OLD GETS SLIGHTLY DRUNK AT HIS BIRTHDAY PARTY THEN GOES HOME TO BED

On other pages:

● Picture of 18-year-old looking slightly drunk as he leaves his birthday party to go home to bed **2**

● Pictures of nightclub not trashed by 18-year-old at his birthday party **4-7**

● Pictures of lap-dancer who didn't share evening of debauchery with the 18-year-old as he was home in bed **12-25**

● Picture of newspaper with too much space to fill **25-94**

DIARY

GUNTER GRASS: ME AND MY ONION

My memory is an onion, anxious to be peeled, causal of occasional tears yet resolute in its translucent unyieldingness. It certainly adds flavour to a stew.

My supreme memory of my youth, unfettered by time, is of my penis. Anxious to be peeled, causal of occasional tears yet resolute in its translucent unyieldingness, it too is an onion. It certainly adds flavour to a stew. Now in old age, I think of family meals much enhanced by its insertion.

Beneath its dry and crackly skin, we find another, more moist layer, that once detached reveals a third, beneath which a fourth and fifth lie await. It is only when chopped into little pieces that it brings forth tears.

Have I yet told you of mine penis? I have long possessed one, and furthermore the one I possess has always been the same as that which I have now, an all-weather chum. We are, I ascertain from my records, as old as one another, or, to employ alternative words, contemporaries.

As an acclaimed artist – for the acclaim that has so remorselessly pursued me throughout my life has not been confined solely to my writings – the muse has begged me to paint my penis from every angle, sometimes as though in earnest meditation, sometimes attempting to dig up some hidden memory, and at other times with a member of the female sex, endeavouring to afford her the satisfaction that she come to expect from a writer and artist who has oft-times been neglected or confined to the fringe by those who seethe with jealousy at an artist whose integrity has constantly remained upstanding.

I peel the onion of my memory, first one layer, then another, and then assuredly another, when suddenly buried deep in it I espy the glint of something unexpected, namely something I had not expected to espy therein.

At first I can make out the shape distantly only, but then I realise that it is – oh yes! oh no! oh yes! oh no! – a hat, quite military, initialled with two distinctive letters, both the same. The first is S and so is the second. SS.

My goodness, the hat in question is undeniably an SS helmet, and at that moment I recall with a start that I was, unbeknownst to me, a member of the SS, an organisation that had done uncalled-for things but so very many years ago that it is most extremely hard to remember without forgetting.

I feel deeply a sense of terrible shame when I am recalling my SS past. To feel this terrible sense of shame, when I did so little wrong – I was a young lad who knew no better, for goodness sake – well, it truly makes me proud.

What can I, the distinguished novelist and prize-winning author of many works of art studied and enjoyed the world over in so many major cities and towns, remember of that idealistic young man and his ill-timed foray into the uniform of the Waffen SS?

Memory is an onion.

Can you remember an onion you may have peeled and consumed, perhaps in a delicious steaming hot beef stew with mushrooms, carrots, garlic and other nutritious items, some sixty years ago or more? How ludicrous, how positively absurd, is the idea! Of course you cannot – and neither can I, you dolt! One onion is very much like another. Surely he would be condemned as an extreme oddball who could remember such useless irrelevancies?

I hold the onion to my nose; the tears begin to flow. But if I whistle, my well-being remains perfectly satisfactory. How much should the writer pay for an onion? No more than is necessary. The great writer vows to confront his own past not with the wind-blown rhetoric of lesser beings – a wind that sets sail leaves, twigs, items of litter, outsize hats, hair, sweet-wrappers, and much else besides to destinations both unknown and unwarranted – but with the eyes and the ears of an artist determined upon taking the truth prisoner, before locking the door and shutting him away.

Who was that young recruit who bore my name?

How was he related, if at all, to the author with the international reputation who would go on to write such classic works of fiction as *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Days* and who would unflinchingly advise his country on how to face up to and confront its Nazi past?

The young officer wearing the SS helmet was me, but he was also not me, for I am not him, so how can anyone say I was him, that would be most foolish. He may have marched in formation with other young SS officers, and he may have looked a bit like them, but he was not one of them, he was much more sensitive than the rest of that ungainly mob, he was a loner, he could not even ride a bike, he spent his spare time perusing great works of improving literature, he was really just doing it because he couldn't think of anything better to do, he did not want to stand out from the crowd, he was a dreamer, he liked the tunes, and for pity's sake the young lad was only obeying orders.

It takes a nerve of solid iron, attested by the Nobel Committee, no less, to look back on the past without changing the subject, to unpeel the raw onion and in so doing thereby remember that which must never be forgotten about our country's at times ignoble past.

Alas, there is much of that conflict that slips the memory, but as luck would have it shortly after the conflict had been averted, I find the voluptuous Inge remains firmly lodged there in an upper room, sweet beyond compare, she had to teach me not to rush, to use my fingers, use them all and gently, the way she did. There was so much for us both to discover. Moist and fathomless. All there, waiting to be touched. Soft and round. Yielding. The noises, the animal sounds we made! I only hope the novice proved a good learner. It is my suspicion – correction, my belief! – that he did. Oh, Inge! Oh, Gunter!

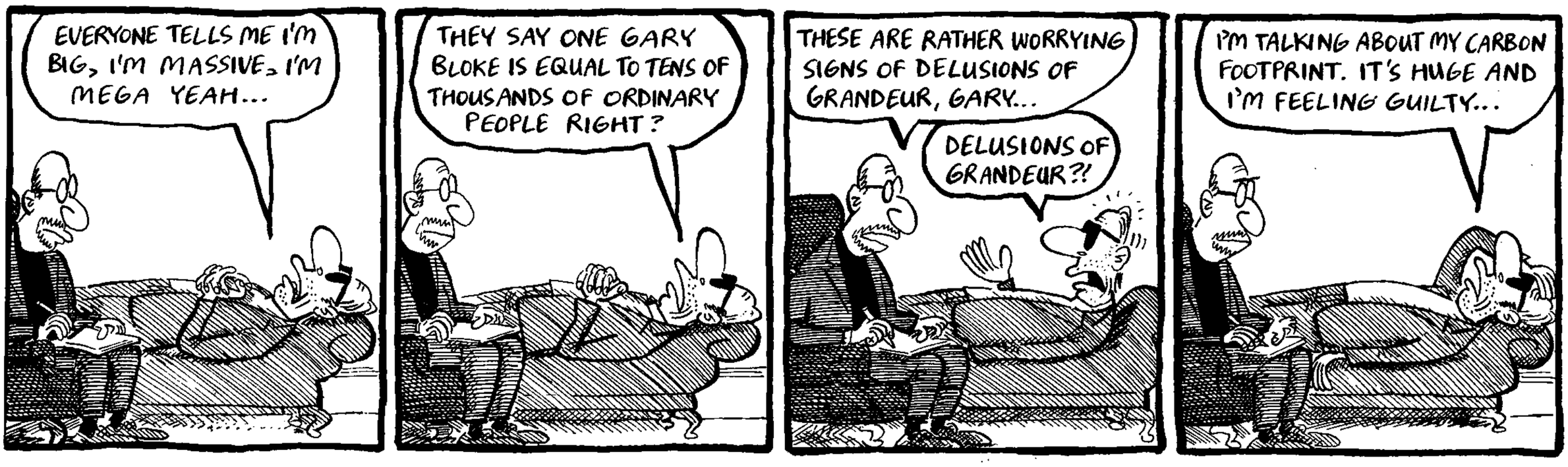
Now where was I? Or to word it differently: was I where now? Where now I was? Let us face facts! I shall never forget the time spent in the uniform with the double rune by the youth who was bearing my name. That is for others to do. The onion may be unforgiving consumed raw, but, gently poached, it makes for a soup most comforting.

As told to

CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


EVERYONE TELLS ME I'M BIG, I'M MASSIVE, I'M MEGA YEAH...
THEY SAY ONE GARY BLOKE IS EQUAL TO TENS OF THOUSANDS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE RIGHT?
THESE ARE RATHER WORRYING SIGNS OF DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR, GARY...
DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR?!
I'M TALKING ABOUT MY CARBON FOOTPRINT. IT'S HUGE AND I'M FEELING GUILTY...

Literary Review

Overblown and over here

The Memory Keeper's Daughter
Kim Edwards
(Penguin, £7.99)

POSSIBLY the most significant thing about this artefact – No 1 on the *Bookseller* chart, a quarter of a million copies sold and rising – is the identity of its front-cover sponsor.

"Simply beautiful," Jodi Picoult has enthused, a couple of inches down-wind from the Richard & Judy Summer Read sticker, and the general effect is as if J.K. Rowling had stuck her imprimatur on A.N. Unknown's new series about a boy with a scar on his forehead flying off to wizarding school on his broomstick.

What might be called the Jodi Picoult & Associates phenomenon kicked into gear a couple of summers ago when Ms P, a little-known American unregarded on these shores, got the R&J leg-up. *Keeping The Faith*, which confirmed the lustre of the Picoult brand early last year, was an extraordinary slice of US domestic gothic with religious overlays in which "Faith", a seven-year-old girl caught up in a parental tug of love, started hearing secret messages from someone called "Guard", brought her grandma back from the dead, healed an AIDS-ravaged baby and developed stigmata on the backs of her hands. It could only have happened in the States. Home-grown audiences, mysteriously, *loved* it.

The Memory Keeper's Daughter, trackless months spent on the stateside bestseller sheets before transferral here, is a slightly – but only slightly – restrained variation on the Picoult template, in which heavy-handed symbolism and rank implausibility march hand in hand. It opens on a snowy night in 1964 when the extreme weather compels Dr David Henry to lead his pregnant wife Norah into the delivery suite himself. She gives birth, in quick succession, first to a healthy son and then, now heavily sedated, to a Down's Syndrome girl. The latter Doc H instantly hands to besotted nurse Caroline with instructions to bear her off to the local institution that deals with such cases. Norah, on waking, is told that the baby is dead. Caroline, flouting instructions, quits town in a hurry and raises little Phoebe herself.

There follows a 300-page exposition of the past's terrible reluctance to lie down and do what you tell it, in which the shadow of the absent child hangs over the Henrys' life and ultimately drives them apart, the whole quarter century bound up in an atmosphere of the densest prefiguration. You just know that bad stuff is going to happen and – whomp! – here it comes. No child can swing from a tree without breaking a limb, no infant get stung by a bee without some life-threatening allergic reaction kicking in, and when Caroline remarks of her long-distance lorry-driving husband that she wishes he didn't have to be away so much, the reader, shuddering to learn his fate, is liable to feel a bit short-changed by the busted leg Al sustains in the auto-smash.

As for the symbolism, snow routinely falls and rivers foam reliably into torrent, but where Ms Edwards really excels is in the character of pregnant teenage Rosemary, whom Henry finds in the deserted family cabin in West Virginia, and brings back home, thereby – or so we infer – precipitating his divorce. For the benefit of anyone who hasn't yet twigged her significance, Rosemary tells her benefactor that *I fill up that place left by the daughter you gave away*.

Dialogue-wise, people say a great many obvious things with a great deal of force and energy, with Bree, Norah's rambunctious younger sister, observing at one point that "Everyone is sad. So happy and sad, all at once. They don't know what to say, that's all," while Frederic, Norah's new squeeze, chips in to remark that "It's good to be in love." Like Ms Picoult's genre-defining forerunners, what distinguishes this from the thronged competition of the Waterstone's table is its absolute seriousness. The average British bestseller written by a home-grown talent generally wears its air of contrivance – lessons learned and tricks turned – like a buttonhole. But those stateside literary mommas, man, they *mean* it.

Salman Rushdie

Crashing bore

Rant
Chuck Palahniuk
(Cape, £12.99)

WHAT follows is an "oral history" compiled from interviews with a variety of witnesses with stupid, made up names intended to create the impression of a real character by the name of…

Rant Casey (*Novel protagonist*) Sure I knew Chuck Palahniuk. The writer? He was always followin' me around with his nose up my ass, writing it all down in his book. Said it was gonna be his best novel ever. More disgustin' and violent and provocative than anything he'd written before. And? It's only a book, I told him. He talked awful tough but underneath I could tell he was yellow as hell.

Wallace Boyer (*Car salesman*) I appear as the first "witness" in the book Chuck wrote. I'm this really dull automobile salesman, who rabbits on about his sales technique, to give an oblique entry into the real subject of the book, which is this guy Rant Casey who gets involved in a violent auto-destructive game called Party Crashing, in which crazy people, er, crash cars. (I sell 'em, they crash 'em!)

Bodie Carlyle (*Childhood friend*) I talk about Rant's childhood in a small town on the big prairie, called Middleton, where the folks is awful plain and simple and the dogs is awful smelly and Rant is more like one of 'em dogs than he ever is like a reg'lar human being. Fer' instance, when the wind blows over the garbage can, and all them panty pads and pussy plugs and used rubbers get blown about like tumbleweed, they tend to get snagged along the barbed wire fencing, and all the dogs go crazy for the scents off of them. But it was Rant who could sniff 'em real good and tell you just exactly whose bodily fluids they contained. Why he even tell you what they had for dinner!

Phoebe Truffeau PhD (*Epidemiologist*) I'm here to talk about rabies and epidemics generally in a series of cod-scientific-historical comments. The point is that Rant used to get himself bitten by spiders, snakes and other feral life forms just for the hell of it. Then of course he infected everyone else. So this weird epidemic disease that everyone seems to have, now that it's the future? It was all down to Rant, supposedly. (He got his kick by making folks sick.)

Echo Lawrence (*Party crasher*) I meet Rant later, when he goes to the big city and gets involved in this car crashing game. As a crippled, car-crash orphan, I suffer from low self-esteem and am a willing partner in any kind of three-sided sado-masochistic swingers' club stuff. (Here's a picture of me polishing my dildo.) Oh yeah, and Rant gave me rabies. He gave it to everyone, just by kissing them, only he probably did a bit more than kissing with me. I'd let Rant ride in my backseat for months.

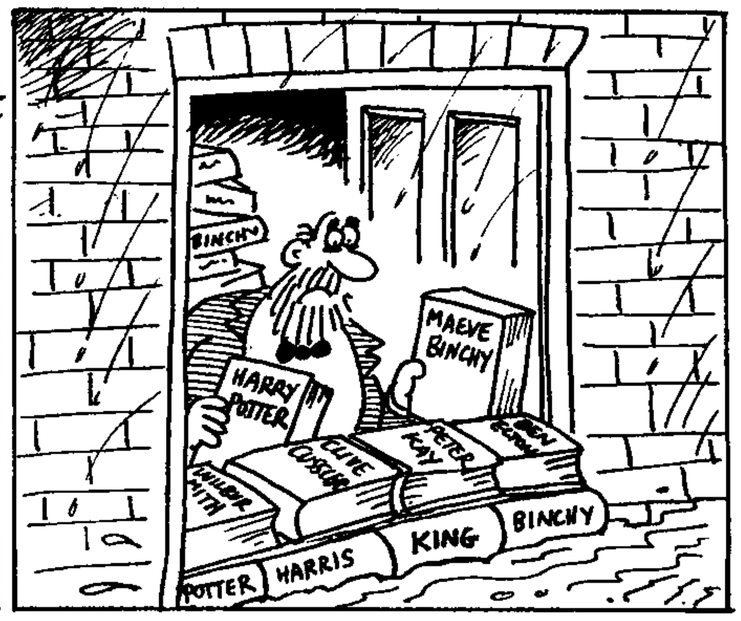
Wallace Boyer (*Car salesman*) "And your truly effective salesman, he knows how to fake that he really, truly, does give a shit." (Bit like writers, really.)

Shot Dunyun (*Party Crasher*) I'm another character with a silly name brought on, repeatedly, to deliver snippets of observation about Rant. Like, that what bothered Rant was the fake, bullshit nature of everything? (Like this whole, like, *book* thing?)

From the Field Notes of Green Taylor Simms (*Historian*) I chronicle for posterity this phenomenon of "party crashing" in which "night-timers" cruise the streets after the curfew, in a variety of borrowed or stolen vehicles festooned with improbable add-ons, like Xmas trees or coffee mugs bolted onto the roof, or toothpasted graffiti saying "Just Married", and deliberately ram each other just for the fun of it.

Echo Lawrence: Earlier, when I say I let Rant "ride in my backseat", that's not a euphemism. (Did I really need to say this?)

Neddy Nelson (*Party Crasher*) I'm another of these sick weirdos who gets his kicks by crashing cars. Didn't someone already write a novel about that? English guy called



JG Ballard. *Crash*? So what's new? Not much it would seem. (They made a film of it, too, just like they made a film of Chuck's book *Fight Club*.) Towards the end of this book, in a desperate bid to lend it a futuristic frisson, a touch of sci-fi credibility, "Chuck" introduces a cheesy notion of, er, *time travel*?

Tina Something (*Party Crasher*) All the above names actually appear in the novel, and mine is no exception, only I really think Chuck could have come up with, like, er, *something* better? Not that it would matter, all of us "crashing bores" would sound the same by any other name, just as we all sound the same anyway, we all sound like Chuck.

Jonathan Cape (*Publisher*) We used to be thought quite a literary house, once upon a time. That may be why we let our blurb-writer describe Mr Palahniuk as "the post-millennial Jonathan Swift". If any of us had actually read the book, well, I dare say we'd have put it up for a prize, too. It really is that specious. I mean, special. (Memo to accounts: make sure Waterstone's get their bung or "promola" for this one.)

Books & Bookmen

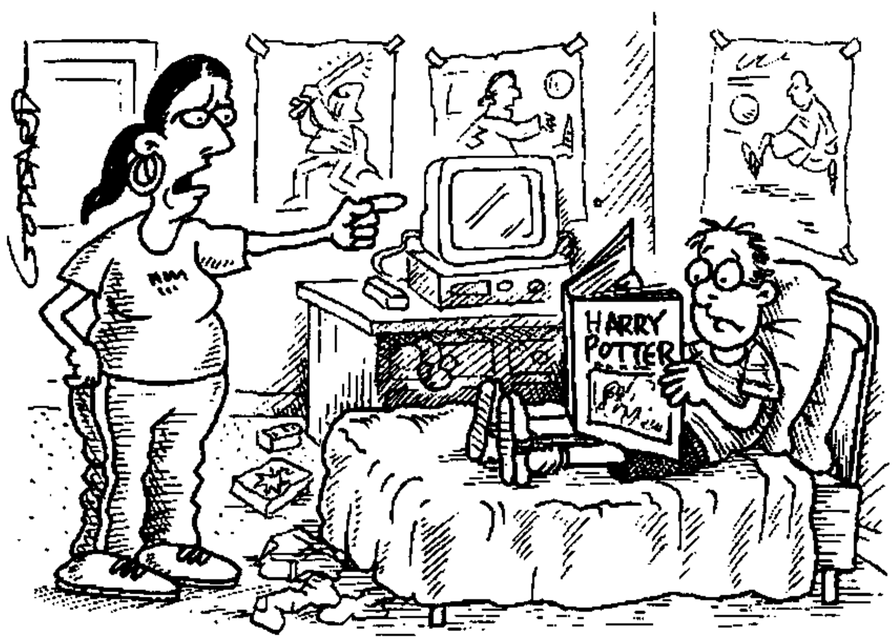
■ WHO IS Britain's most prolific author? Step forward... Gordon Brown, clearly a man with time on his hands: in the past 10 months he has published no fewer than three books.

His latest offering, *Britain's Everyday Heroes*, was published by Mainstream last week and serialised in his favourite newspaper, the *Daily Mail*.

Alás, the PM has some way to go before he matches the popular appeal of his friend J. K. Rowling. *Moving Britain Forward*, his book of speeches, has shifted 648 copies in paperback and a prudent 175 in hardback.

Courage: Eight Portraits did slightly better, with sales of 2,246. Meanwhile, Gordon's biography of the Red Clydesider James Maxton, reissued in a new paperback edition five years ago, has so far sold a grand total of 482 copies.

'Bookworm'



"180 quid that Nintendo wii cost me! And you're reading a bloody book!"

Fucks & Fuckmen

■ MUCH has been made of the amount of coarse language in Alastair Campbell's memoirs. As a service to readers [it's not pleasant, but someone has to do it] the *Eye* has counted all the dirty words.

The Blair Years contains 135 fucks, fuckers and other fucking variants, 38 shits, 26 craps, 21 balls, 15 bastards, 13 wankers (plus one, interesting, "collective wank"), nine arses (but only one arsehole), five cunts, five twats, two each of tossers, cows and bitches, and one dickhead.

Oh, and 66 WMDs... although when we looked again they weren't there.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ WHEN local volunteers took over several small libraries that Cambridgeshire council had closed in 2003, it was hailed as a win-win for the villages and the county council.

Never mind that Gamlingay library closed for most of December due to lack of volunteers around Christmas; or that Fulbourn village library says it "relies on donations of books" to supplement those it gets from the county library service. And never mind that the council had managed to replace its paid staff with well-meaning volunteers. What next? Volunteer social workers?

Now other councils around the country are looking to save money in this way and have the government's blessing. "I can even imagine community groups being commissioned by the council to take on and run their library. We should not be afraid of that," Culture Minister David Lammy told last year's Public Library Authorities conference.

In Lancashire, residents who reopened Caton library (it was closed to save money) now charge an annual membership fee; while in Buckinghamshire, West Wycombe library reopened in March but limited opening hours due to, er, a shortage of trained volunteers. Other councils aren't even bothering to close their libraries and are actively seeking community groups on to whom they can foist responsibility for what is supposed to be a statutory service. Gloucestershire is currently consulting on its Library Network Strategy and its search for "cost-effective service delivery" has led it to propose "community owned, staffed and operated facilities" in a number of smaller villages.

This still didn't bother Lammy, who popped up again in a debate in June to tell parliament he was "pleased that discussions are taking place with communities in Dorset about other means of delivering the services".

The option was indeed discussed in Dorset last month. But councillors were advised that there was a "serious risk of failure" in the plan and that in the light of legal advice on the implications of replacing trained, paid staff with volunteers "the proposed approach to local community organisations to provide volunteers is more problematic/cannot be recommended".

PS: At last some good news. The closure of six libraries in Conwy (*Eye* 1186) has been postponed by councillors after the Welsh Assembly announced that it plans a major programme of capital investment in libraries.

Jane [Fonda] is 70 this year, but she looks much younger. Dressed in an elegant cream suit by her favourite 'green' designer Linda Loudermilk ('It's made of naturally dyed hemp from organically raised sheep'), her blonde hair is short and highlighted, but there's very little make-up.

Mail Weekend

Federer also gave us his own Rambo, as well as his Fred [Astaire]. What's more, he threw in D'Artagnan, Houdini, Picasso, Lao-Tzu and Dr Strange. He can be as mellifluous as Noel Coward, as harsh as Bob Dylan. He can be as canny as Ulysses, as defiant as Hercules, as brilliant as Einstein, as brutal as Genghis Khan. All this and more.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

Sardinian food often has a mordant taste to it, a taste of regret and resentment, or loss and vendetta...Sardinian cooking is an insistent, complex mix of indecent proposal, kidnap demand and a poem written to the Samaritans.

A.A. GILL
Sunday Times

11.30 Jazz on 3
Jon Rose in Session
Jez Nelson presents an exclusive session featuring experimental violinist Jon Rose with virtuosic cellist Frances-Marie Uitti... His recent work includes regular

Pseuds Corner

performances with his 'Futch' trio and an extended project playing fences around the world with his violin bow. Uitti is famed for her experimental approach to composition and improvisation, and, in particular, for her extended technique at the instrument, which she often plays with two bows at once.

Radio Times

One of the highlights of any visit to the National Gallery in London is the 19th century French painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's portrait of Madame Moitessier. It is said that Ingres initially turned down the chance to paint the imposing wife of a lace merchant, but was finally persuaded when he met the lady in question and was struck by her 'terrible et belle tete'...

Ingres's phrase struck me as I was watching Miranda Heart in the first episode of the new series of BBC2's sci-fi comedy Hyperdrive last night.

TEDDY JAMIESON
Scottish Herald

Pseuds Corporate

Justifiably proud of your influencing, communication and interpersonal skills, your leadership on consultation, advocacy and issue resolution has achieved great outcomes for your organisation and its stakeholders. Your abilities combine strategic thinker with grounded pragmatist. Your people orientation, commercial acumen and political astuteness enable you quickly to understand intricate situations and deliver results.

A great track record. But where does your career go from here?

Head of Stakeholder Engagement
Guardian job advertisement

CONTRIBUTORS: Nicky Haslam, 'Proteus' (and five others), Joy Crispin-Wilson, Tony Augarde, Michael Clarke, Mike Harding.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

METRONET

Tubular balls-up

WHILE Metronet's collapse will cause some financial pain to the shareholder companies, most of the guilty parties will walk away from the London underground crash with no worries.

Pricewaterhouse can keep the £29m it got for advising that the PPP (public private partnership) was financially sound. Lobbyist Lexington – run by John Prescott's pal Mike Craven – can keep all the fees it earned lobbying for Metronet.

But luckiest of all is Ernst & Young, which has pulled off the smart trick of profiting from both Metronet's appointment and its collapse. Though pushed through by the Treasury, the ill-fated PPP contract still had to get the all-clear from the then Transport Secretary Stephen Byers. For that it needed a "value for money" endorsement – just the job for a helpful consultancy firm. Step forward E&Y, which delivered its approval and a bill for £884,000. Ernst & Young has now been appointed as administrator of Metronet, so it can earn millions more clearing up the mess it helped make.

Booby prize: Cherie and Tony present Metronet's CEO Andrew Lezala with a best-in-show rosette at the Labour conference, 2006

Even the actual members of the Metronet consortium, despite taking a financial hit, may find silver linings. One is WS Atkins, a "technologically based" consultancy which earns £1bn a year by providing advice and support. City brokers Arbuthnot told the *FT* last week that "any fall-out from the Metronet case would be more than offset by demand for Atkins' services from other clients" – particularly in China and the Middle East, where perhaps news of the Metronet fiasco has yet to filter through.

Metronet's big idea was that its members – including old *Eye* favourites Thames Water and EDF Energy – would share the tube work between them, without going to competitive tender. As any fule no, the main thing that keeps private firms motivated is the threat from rivals, yet it took Metronet years to realise it had invented a recipe for inefficiency. If Atkins didn't recognise or couldn't manage the problems in its own consortium, how good is the advice it gives others?

EDF Energy has also walked away relatively unscathed as Londoners pick up the pieces. Just three weeks ago the same EDF proudly declared itself a "top tier" sponsor of the 2012 Olympics, giving it exclusive rights among utilities companies to associate itself with the London games. It must be hoping that in five years' time nobody remembers how it dumped on the capital's tube travellers.

Another consortium member, Balfour Beatty, has already benefited from amnesia. When the government awarded the PPP deal to Metronet in 2003, it knew Balfour Beatty would take over maintaining, renewing and operating most London Underground tracks. It also knew Balfour Beatty was facing prosecution for the Hatfield derailment in 2000. The company was responsible for maintaining the track at Hatfield but left in place a faulty rail which had been noticed 21 months earlier. In 2005 a judge said: "I regard Balfour Beatty as one of the worst examples of industrial negligence in a high risk industry I have seen." He fined the company £10m, but it was later reduced to £7.5m after Balfour Beatty's lawyers argued that £10m was excessive for an accident that killed four people.

And what of the politicians who promoted the PPP disaster? They are either comfortably retiring from Westminster – like Prescott and Blair – or thriving like Gordon Brown and Shriti Vadera, the new Development Minister who pushed the scheme through.

Alastair Campbell's diaries confirm that making the PPP happen was a top priority at Number 10 and 11. Blair and Brown spent valuable time trying to persuade Ken Livingstone to run as Labour's mayoral candidate on "a manifesto that included PPP". When he refused, the current prime minister was even angrier than the former one. "On PPP, G[ordon] B[rown] felt Livingstone had to go for more than just saying he supported the manifesto. He would have to retract what he said." Ken (or as Campbell has it "Ken fucking Livingstone") refused. "We have really fucked this up from start to finish," Campbell admits.

Instead of accepting the mistake, the government persisted in its folly. In a graphic sign of how comfortable Labour was with Metronet, the firm erected a full scale tube train in the lobby of Labour's annual conference in Manchester last year, and gave bottles of "Metronet" brand water to all delegates. Unfortunately, while Metronet could make a tube train appear in Manchester, it couldn't make the damn things run properly in London.

NUCLEAR NEWS

Atomic kittens

WHO is hoping to slip into British Nuclear Fuels' radioactive shoes when, as is predicted, BNFL is finally wound up next year?

Step forward BWXT, an American nuclear outfit with an unenviable record for mishandling atomic warheads.

As part of the British government's withdrawal from the nuclear business, BNFL is selling off a number of its contracts and responsibilities. Industry insiders are worried because suits from BWXT were in Britain last week making presentations to the government. They are worried because BWXT has been repeatedly fined in the US for sloppy practices.

BNFL currently helps run the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston and the decommissioning of Sellafield; and it also has a unit called BNFL Project Services which monitors radiation at atomic power stations in the UK. The Americans, it appears, would like to carry out a number of these lucrative tasks.

BWXT, an established US military contractor, has been taking old atomic warheads to pieces at its Pantex plant near Amarillo, Texas, since 2000. It works its staff hard. According to official reports from 2006, production technicians "work 72-hour weeks (6 days, 12 hours)". Staff have complained about the long hours, arguing that they compromise safety.

There have certainly been some alarming safety violations at the plant. In 2005 Pantex was fined $124,000 for using an unsafe procedure to stabilise and remove high explosive on a "W56" nuclear warhead. In November 2006 it was fined $110,000 for other safety breaches during "three unsuccessful attempts to separate two parts of a weapon assembly". Engineers had apparently been using the wrong tool and applied too much pressure to the bomb. Despite the modest fine, some experts believe the mistake could potentially have led to an atomic explosion.

BWXT technicians aren't the only ones feeling the heat. Earlier this year guards at the site went on strike for six weeks because post-9/11 security measures meant they were working 12-hour shifts for eight days in a row. Though the strike has now been settled, a row is still rumbling about the guards' training and the kind of rifles they are allowed to carry.

Will BWXT now bring its distinctive management style to Aldermaston and other UK nuclear installations?

ON THE BUSES

Fare cop

ARRIVA likes to boast that it is one of the largest transport companies in Europe, employing more than 34,000 people. In addition it runs a huge bus operation in Britain and was recently awarded the Cross Country Rail franchise.

It also likes to proclaim what a responsible company it is. According to its website, for example, it is committed to building sustainable relationships in the communities it serves, and it expects its employees to act honestly and with integrity.

So could it really be possible that after a long high court hearing, a very senior judge (soon to be promoted to the appeal court) decided last month that one of Arriva's most senior executives had lied in court in denying that Arriva deliberately tried to derail the sale by Chester council of its bus services company in order to leave the market wide open for… Arriva?

Er, yes it could; and all the gory details are set out in unedifying detail in a 201-paragraph judgment from Mr Justice Rimer. His picture of the company's values, and the way it operates, is rather different from the one Arriva likes to perpetuate.

The judge recounts how in 2006 Chester council decided to sell off its bus services by inviting organised bids, and how Arriva refused to participate in the tender but instead gave notice that it intended to start its own services on the

routes operated by the council and run buses at exactly the same time as the council.

Robert Hind, managing director of Arriva's operations in the north west, denied in the witness box that giving these notices was intended as a threat to the council or to frighten off would-be bidders; but the judge rejected both this claim and much of Mr Hind's evidence, some of which the judge called "nonsense" and "untrue" and designed to try to explain a course of action likely to have resulted in the council's bus company going bust.

In short, the judge found Arriva was willing to use the same sort of aggressive tactics that had already attracted the attention of the Monopolies Commission, and then to come to court to pretend otherwise and tell him lies about it on oath. If that's the kind of respect the company gives to a high court judge, what can its passengers expect?

GORDONOMICS

Brown sauce

MORE of Gordon Brown's numbers unravelled last week when the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) reported on efforts to tackle "missing trader" VAT fraud.

Last December Brown proudly announced that the EU had agreed he could implement a measure known as a "reverse charge" to stem losses from the £2bn-a-year scam. The then chancellor boasted that "the impact of the reverse charge has been cautiously estimated with a yield of an additional £500m in 2007/08".

Just eight months on, exactly as experts had predicted, the reality is less rosy. The measure only covers trading in certain goods like mobile phones and the crooks are – surprise, surprise – moving into other products like MP3 players. The officially estimated benefit of the move is now £50m.

The only effective way to deal with missing trader fraud is to re-write European VAT law (unlikely) or keep investigating and prosecuting. Not easy when HMRC is pushing through 25,000 job cuts on Brown's orders in the name of "efficiency".

The efficiency programme itself, designed to make Brown look tough on Whitehall waste, is now being frustrated by the infamous Mapeley contract through which HMRC sold its offices to a company in Bermuda and rents them back for 20 years (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

Big savings were expected from reducing the office space used as the department cuts staff, which ought to have been easy as the justification for the Mapeley deal was its "flexibility". But no! The Treasury select committee has discovered that 71 percent of the offices can't be vacated without paying prohibitive penalties, despite earlier promises that 60 percent could simply be emptied – yet more porky pies emanating from the *Eye's* favourite PFI deal.

If HMRC wanted some real efficiency savings, it might do better looking at how much it pours into certain companies' coffers. The report confirmed that the price of its IT contract with Cap Gemini/Fujitsu has escalated from £2.9bn to £8.5bn, just as the previous one with EDS went from £1bn to £2.5bn. Such increases dwarf any savings from job cuts, which the MPs found were severely hitting service standards and, internal documents revealed in *Eye* 1165 show, often cost more in lost tax income than they save in wages.

TAX HAVEN UK

Avoiding the issue

SOMEHOW the growing numbers of wealthy British residents who avoid tax on their foreign income by claiming not to be domiciled in the UK are also managing to pay less tax on their UK income than they did a few years ago.

Treasury Minister Jane Kennedy has revealed that the so-called "non-doms" paid just £3bn tax last year. Yet in 2003, the Treasury has previously revealed, they paid £5bn. Since then their numbers have ballooned from an estimated 80,000 to 112,000 in 2005/06 and are now thought to have reached 200,000.

Meanwhile, the incomes of the bankers and hedge fund managers who make up the largest group of non-doms have also shot up. So billions more tax is vanishing, almost certainly through ever more expert scams to stash cash abroad and channel earnings through offshore contracts.

All of which raises the question of how much tax the non-doms dodge every year. In 2003 it was officially estimated at £1bn, but now appears to be too embarrassingly high to disclose, despite Gordon Brown's promises of more open government. Ministers repeatedly evade MPs' attempts to get up-to-date figures, while the *Eye's* Freedom of Information requests are stonewalled.

Coming clean would lead, the HMRC claims, to a "weakening of government decision making" while, according to the Treasury, disclosure would deny government "the opportunity to present its policies in a coherent fashion".

When offshore tax havens tart themselves out to the international tax dodger they are roundly condemned – not least by the UK government – as a drain on other economies. Yet that's precisely what the non-dom rules do, turning Britain into a tax haven for the super-rich. It's not easy to present that policy in a coherent fashion.

TAX CREDITS

Where was Prudence?

IT WON'T surprise millions of exasperated tax credit claimants, but a response to a Freedom of Information request from the *Eye* reveals that the new PM's flagship scheme was probably the most ill-thought of all his policies.

Just as this year's depressing figures emerge – £6.6bn overpaid so far, £3.9bn still to be recovered, £700m already written off, plus widespread fraud and hardship – the Treasury has revealed that no assessment at all was made of the administrative burden tax credits would impose or what difficulties they would cause for claimants before they were brought in four years ago.

Asked for the assessments of these issues, the Treasury produced a single page from a 2002 internal memo showing how people's tax credit entitlements might change – but with no mention of the overpayments, errors, IT cock-ups or fraud that immediately came to blight the scheme.

The only groundwork is found in a hilariously optimistic Treasury document "*The Child and Working Tax Credits*" from April 2002, describing "a responsive system". The 750,000 people who might see falls in their entitlement would efficiently notify their changed circumstances, enabling HMRC's well-oiled systems (courtesy of EDS) to adjust most awards seamlessly in-year. Only in some of these cases would "overpayments" emerge.

As it turns out, 2m families a year are affected by overpayments, often at great personal cost (see *Eyes passim*). And whereas the prospect of overpayments was brushed off as a minor inconvenience – it would be "possible to recover many overpayments by adjusting subsequent awards of tax credits" rather than through direct demands – hapless punters are currently being chased for £1.5bn.

Meanwhile, the cost of running the system has risen by 44 percent to £587m a year, making it a particularly expensive way to run a benefits system. But Gordon Brown wanted his "responsive" tax credits at any cost – so nobody bothered to ask whether the scheme would ever really work.

LONDON 2012

Olympic-sized fiddle

If ever proof were needed that official figures are shamelessly fiddled to push through politically-motivated projects, it emerged in last week's National Audit Office update on the Olympic budget.

As revealed in *Eye* 1177, the government knew the £2.3bn cost it put forward in its 2004 bid was woefully inadequate. But it had to pull the wool over everybody's eyes as this was the figure on which it had won parliamentary approval for a bid and couldn't face admitting a price rise even before the International Olympic Committee had decided who would host the games.

In preparing the bid figures not only were VAT and other bills overlooked but, it now emerges, official Treasury "Green Book" guidance on costing major projects was completely ignored. The rules require an "optimism bias" of up to 50 percent to be added to allow for the tendency to underestimate costs, an adjustment introduced in 2003 to boost the private finance initiative.

In working out whether PFI is better value for a project, optimism bias has to be added to the public sector alternative. But when it came to the Olympics, very much a publicly funded deal, ministers and consultants conveniently overlooked the Treasury's rules – sparing billions on the bid.

The calculations thus fudged and the bid duly won, good causes and taxpayers can now pick up the multi-billion pound tab they weren't told about when they were urged to "back the bid".

GOVERNMENT SALES

Troublesome Priest?

PLANS to flog off £1bn-worth of government buildings in Northern Ireland are on hold after a rejected bidder launched a legal challenge claiming the outsourcing process was "inherently irrational" and "unfair".

The Workplace 2010 scheme involves selling – then leasing back – around 80 buildings, including the main civil service offices and benefits offices across Northern Ireland (*Eye* 1143). The plan was announced by minister of state Jeff Rooker during direct rule, despite objections from some Northern Ireland politicians.

The Partenaire consortium, which includes Northern Ireland-based property developers McAleer and Rushe, claims its rejection from the bidding process earlier this year was "tainted" due to the involvement of Robin Priest of the Deloitte consultancy *(pictured)*. He led the team that was advising the government on the sale.

Eye readers may recall Mr Priest as the founder and former chief executive of Mapeley, the tax haven-based outfit that bought up Britain's tax offices in the disastrous STEPS contract (*Eyes passim*). Funnily enough, Mapeley was also in the running for the Belfast deal, but was itself dropped in May. Potential problems with Mr Priest's involvement were raised back in *Eye* 1169 and in the *Belfast Telegraph*.

In its application for judicial review, Partenaire also claims its bid wasn't properly evaluated because the reasons it was given for rejection included serious mistakes. Then in May the NI Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) put out a press release about Workplace 2010, saying that "final decisions on the scope and content of the contract" would be decided by the now devolved administration before invitations to the two remaining bidders were issued. Partenaire says that effectively means there will be a new contract, for which there will have been no proper competitive procurement process.

The choice, should the new Northern Ireland administration still insist on pursuing it, is currently between Land Securities Trillium and Telereal, which already bought and leases back most of BT's property. But everything is now in limbo until the legal challenge is resolved.

Surgical: Lord Darzi

HEALTH REFORMS

Capital punishment

BEFORE Gordon Brown dispatched the surgeon and new Health Minister Lord Darzi on his part-time mission to save the NHS countrywide, it's a shame no one at Number 10 bothered to scrutinise his blue-print for London, published last month.

Much of his "review" of the capital's healthcare appears to have been borrowed from the number-crunching closure plans drawn up last year by the Blairite Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which has called for the axing of nine accident and emergency units in London.

Darzi and his team of McKinsey consultants ducked the key question of which popular local hospitals should be sacrificed in the mission to reduce London to a few select "specialist" hospitals. Nor did they trouble themselves with how many jobs and services are likely to be axed in the process. Instead they resurrected an old idea and gave it the name of "polyclinics", where GPs work in teams of up to 20 to deliver a range of primary care services, along with "lumps and bumps" surgery and other services currently provided in the city's hospitals.

But are these "polyclinics" any more likely to become a reality than the "primary care-led NHS" once advocated by the King's Fund, by the Tomlinson Report and by Virginia Bottomley 15 years ago?

Costings for the proposed clinics – Darzi's "detailed feasibility modelling" – look as if they were worked out on the back of a fag packet. The new model "would, in the most likely growth scenario, save the NHS £1.5bn each year", Darzi claims. He estimates rather optimistically that GPs and consultants earn no more than an average of £125,000 a year (has he seen the new rates?) but staff nurses are costed at £50,000 – a salary that might generate a stampede of applicants, thus leaving hospital and community services short of staff. On these figures a Darzi-style clinic is said to cost around £20m a year to run, or £3.1bn for the 150 he plans - a third of today's £10.1bn London health budget.

Hospital bosses in south-east London have also done the complex sums. They claim polyclinics are a slightly more expensive way to deliver the services and would bring with them the problems associated with the new private treatment centres: overpayment for under use. But such clinics would, of course, suit the government's drive to open up the NHS market, as they could all be run by private healthcare companies.

In the meantime NHS London says it has put on hold planned cuts, closures and the downsizing of some local hospitals until early next year. Whether cash-strapped health trusts can afford the delay, and whether any polyclinics ever emerge from the rubble, remains to be seen.

Fostering wealth

GOVERNMENT efforts to push NHS treatment into the private sector through the Independent Sector Treatment Centre programme are to be assessed by a firm with close ties to the scheme's main promoter.

The Department of Health's Commercial Directorate has selected the *Eye's* favourite health company, Dr Foster Intelligence, to manage data on the ISTCs. With new Health Secretary Alan Johnson agonising over expanding the scheme and the Healthcare Commission last week reporting that comparison of ISTCs with NHS hospitals is frustrated by poor data, objective analysis is critical. But how objective will Dr Foster Intelligence be?

The contract to assess ISTCs represents early pay-back for Dr Foster's recruitment of Geoff Searle, its new "business development director". He arrived in January from the Commercial Directorate, where he just happened to be responsible for, er, pushing through ISTCs.

Last year Searle put up a stout defence of the programme when it was under fire from the Health Select Committee. Now he's one of the top dogs at the company "independently" assessing the private centres.

PS: The creation of Dr Foster Intelligence, a joint venture between Dr Foster Ltd and the Department of Health, was last month described by a parliamentary committee as a "back room" arrangement for which the taxpayer paid over the odds. And who negotiated a venture that broke almost every rule in the book? Yep, the Commercial Directorate.

PPS: Word reaches the *Eye* that the 230 "contractors" running the Commercial Directorate (some through personal service companies, see last *Eye*) are allowed to claim expenses with photocopied receipts, enabling them to pass the originals to their accountants and claim tax relief as well. That would be fraud - so it can't be happening in a government department, can it? A spokeswoman said: "Individuals are entitled to be reimbursed for appropriate expenses but it would not be appropriate to then use receipts for any other purpose." No denial that it's actually going on.

Expanding waste line

NHS bosses in Manchester have come up with a novel way to waste taxpayers' money. First suspend a nurse with 25 years' experience for union activities on the very day she gains promotion. Then pay a consultant huge sums to try to get yourself off the hook when the move looks set to provoke a strike.

Community mental health nurse Karen Reissmann (left) was suspended by Manchester's Mental Health and Social Care Trust after leading public protests at proposed NHS reforms and changes at the trust. She was told she faced charges including damaging the reputation of the trust, behaviour likely to undermine confidence in her and misusing her nursing time. On the same day, however, she received a letter confirming her promotion to senior psychiatric nurse.

What particularly incensed the trust were interviews she gave critical of the transfer of NHS services to the voluntary sector. Nor did she endear herself with comments in the local paper in May, contrasting the "derisory" 1.9 percent pay offer to nurses with the £24,000 increase that boosted the starting salary of new chief executive Sheila Foley to £134,000. When the trust piled on more charges after she spoke out against the disciplinary action, her union, Unison, announced that it would ballot members over strike action in her support.

Ms Reissmann has also criticised the NHS's ever-increasing use of management consultants, describing them as "leeches on the service". So how has the trust reacted to the threat of strike action? For a fee far in excess of her salary, it has commissioned a review of the case (which it calls a "private employment matter") from Mental Health Strategies – a firm of… consultants!

GOVERNMENT WASTE

Still Bourn

THE list of rules the National Audit Office manages to flout grows by the week. The guardian of public sector probity now refuses to obey even the government's own Freedom of Information laws.

The *Eye* has been asking how exactly Sir John Bourn and his wife (above) ran up their immense foreign travel expenses. Could we see the claims (all paid with taxpayers' money)? No, replied the NAO's Director of Corporate Affairs Jill Goldsmith. And why not? Because this "goes beyond the requirements of the FoI Act and would not represent best use of public funds".

In fact the details are squarely *within* the law and can only be withheld under a specified legal exemption, which must be explained. The NAO refuses to do this, however, even though it knows full well how the rules work. Not long ago it wrote a guide to the FoI Act, with a foreword from not only Sir John, but the lord chancellor and the information commissioner too. It included sections such as "senior managers need to set an example" and "you need to determine whether information is covered by an exemption".

If any other body were flouting laws and covering up while the boss spoiled himself and his wife at taxpayers' expense, regulators would be investigating by now. But nobody has the power to scrutinise the NAO. Small wonder that under Sir John's 19-year regime it has become a law unto itself.

The Public Accounts Commission exonerated Sir John from any "impropriety" based on a self-serving private memo from the NAO which gave as a main justification for the Bourns' gallivanting a "portfolio of international work which generates over £4m of income each year". However, NAO accounts just published reveal that most of this income comes from "twinning" projects with other countries which, after expenses, generated a tiny surplus of £131,000 in 2006/07.

Other "international work" set the taxpayer back £624,000. And all that was before Sir John and Lady Bourn's exes. Far from contributing £4m to the NAO's coffers as suggested to parliament, Sir John's global activities in fact *cost* the taxpayer money. But they do provide plenty of nice trips.

The only parliamentary objection to Bourn's junketing has come from Labour MP David Taylor, recently named "Backbencher of the Year". Last week in the Commons he raised the issue of Sir John's chauffeur-driven lift to and from work "using a perk that is not even recorded in NAO accounts" (see last *Eye*) and asking the Public Accounts Commission to "get a grip on this flagrant exploitation of the public purse by the Comptroller and Auditor General".

Bourn somehow retains his saintly reputation in parliamentary circles, however. The commission's Edward Leigh, who also sits on the Commons public accounts committee, replied: "I do not think those remarks do the hon. Gentleman… any credit." Three weeks ago Leigh's commission whitewashed the affair – a far more creditable approach, obviously.

In the City

THE impact on world stock markets of the ticking time bomb represented by $100bn of sub-prime mortgage losses for US lenders and their derivative customers worldwide has suddenly, but belatedly, focused regulatory attention on lending to those who cannot afford to borrow. Nowhere has this lack of attention been greater than at Fundamentally Supine Authority, which is described by insiders as being "asleep at the switch" while a £15bn business expanded exponentially in Britain.

Those with knowledge of the FSA's approach say the decision to begin an enforcement action against the biggest and most aggressive sub-prime lender, GE Money Home Lending (GEMHL), disclosed in *Eye* 1188, and its announcement of action against several unnamed small mortgage brokers is a case of too little too late. There is a growing fear that next year will see a serious crisis in the UK sub-prime market as a result of over-lending to poor credit risks leading to an acceleration in home repossessions.

The FSA took over responsibility for mortgages in 2004 but until a year ago focused mainly on the high street lenders who were deposit takers. There was, it is said, a lack of understanding of how the sub-prime market worked. The FSA is described by an insider as not interested in the sub-prime business, which was seen as too down market to matter. Much of the sub-prime market – 10 percent of mortgage lending - is concentrated among former council house owners or those at the bottom of the housing market with large personal debts they are constantly looking to refinance.

Last autumn as the sub-prime crisis across the Atlantic began to emerge, the FSA was shocked by the results from a routine examination of lending procedures at Kensington Group – another big player whose subsequently revealed financial problems have pushed it into a takeover by the South African bank, Investec. The FSA discovered that the lending was as lax as in many of the US cases. Until then it had assumed poor quality/irresponsible lending was only an American problem.

Two weeks ago Kensington revealed £30m in write-downs in reporting a £10m half-year loss. Kensington is significant because, like many US sub-prime lenders, it borrows to lend and securitises its loans. Bad loans thus hit the value of that security – which is why there is now a rush to quality among those investors who feed the sub-prime and leveraged buy-out markets.

A subsequent FSA review at GEMHL earlier this year revealed similar problems of inappropriate lending to those unable to repay, thereby putting their homes at risk. This was another wake-up call for the FSA, which had assumed that because the US giant General Electric's lending is on balance sheet for its UK subsidiary, that lending would have been rigorously policed.

The problem for the FSA is that GEMHL is fast becoming the lender of last resort to the UK sub-prime market, as other lenders like Kensington and GMAC pull back. So curbing its activities could help precipitate the very crisis it hopes to avoid.

The FSA told GEMHL several weeks ago that it intended to launch an enforcement investigation because it had discovered possible serious breaches of the rules regarding treating customers fairly, customer "detriment" and the necessary systems and controls procedures. GEMHL has denied the FSA's accusations while admitting there had been internal problems.

The FSA has been cooperating with GE's US regulator, the Office of Thrift Supervision. An OTS official confirmed the FSA's decision to begin an enforcement investigation against GE's UK subsidiary. GEMHL has described this as "market speculation".

FSA officials visited OTS headquarters in May and the following month OTS regulators came to London and also visited the GEMHL offices. "We work closely with the FSA," said the OTS official who confirmed that the agency had an "on-going supervisory presence" at GE. OTS officials have confirmed that concerns have also been raised by regulators in other countries about GE lending operations.

The OTS, like the Securities & Exchange Commission, is already on the sub-prime case. In June it announced that Manchester United sponsors American International Group had agreed to provide $178m to help borrowers faced with foreclosure to stay in their homes.

Meanwhile the FSA is still playing the game of regulatory capture. Insiders describe a general malaise and low morale resulting in high staff turnover, particularly on the enforcement side. Morale has been further hit by the expectation of major changes at the top following the arrival of new chief executive Hector Sants – a City man who knows little about high street regulation.

FSA regulators feel outgunned and outnumbered by the regulated who can rely on platoons of highly paid lawyers and former FSA officials to, if not defeat regulatory action, at least delay it for months if not years. The £610,000 FSA fine imposed on GE Capital Bank in January for mis-selling payment protection insurance took almost two years. Enforcement action against GEMHL could take a similar time. The OTS action against AIG began last year.

The FSA's "light touch" style of regulation was created by Prime Minister Gordon Brown when he was chancellor. It was and is proof of Labour's pro-business policy. Which is why the world's bankers and brokers want to do business in London and not in New York where, post-Enron, tough regulation is still seen as necessary.

But the downside of that pro-business approach has been a fear to regulate. Harvard professor Howell E. Jackson has produced a dispiriting compare-and-contrast exercise of the FSA with the SEC and other US regulators. This showed that in the period 2002 to 2004, while US regulators commenced an average of 3,624 enforcement actions a year, the figure for the FSA was just 72! And when it came to punishing the bad guys where it really hurts, while the total US sanctions were more than £2.5bn a year, the FSA figure was £13.5m. No wonder those it regulates see FSA fines as merely a cost of doing business in London.

The Labour-created super-regulator which cost £269m last year employs less than 15 percent of the total staff of all US regulators. Forty percent of the SEC staff works on enforcement. That figure is 10 percent at the FSA. Former chief executive John Tiner left whining about the problem of endemic insider dealing and asking for the poachers to help by controlling the flow of inside information!

The FSA's own study shows that almost a quarter of all deals in 2005 were suspect. Yet under Tiner there had been just one high profile case – hedge fund trader Philippe Jabre and GLG Partners were each fined £750,000 for market abuse last year. In June GLG Partners was fined £1.6m by the SEC for illegal short selling. It had already been fined £1.1m by French regulators for trading ahead of bond issues. GLG has hired former FSA chairman Sir Howard Davies as an adviser!

Last year the SEC filed 46 insider-dealing cases. This year alone it has brought cases against two Britons accused over insider dealing ahead of the private equity bid for power company TXU, and settled a case against Barclays Bank and one of its traders for more than £5m. It has also brought charges over share dealings ahead of Rupert Murdoch's bid for Dow Jones and charged 13 participants in an alleged insider ring from Morgan Stanley, UBS and Bear Stearns. Last week the former chief executive of Qwest, Joe Nacchio, was jailed for six years, ordered to forfeit his $52m profit and fined $19m. How many insider dealing cases have the FSA brought this year? Try none.

In May the FSA humiliatingly abandoned its five-year investigation into the split capital trusts scandal by accepting that four of its prime targets should be "punished" by not taking any senior role in the financial industry until next year or 2009. Wow – that will really frighten anyone determined to rape and pillage investors' savings. It also dropped any action against two major sources of split-capital misery. Such a settlement would not be acceptable to a US regulator.

The FSA is too often afraid to take on big banks and brokers or their employees with their high-powered lawyers. It is paralysed by the price of failure – such as the £1m legal costs bill faced by the Accountancy Investigation & Discipline Board after the collapse of its action against PwC over the Mayflower bus group crash. Better, therefore, to have no rush to judgment, to listen to what the bad guys say and negotiate a settlement which leaves everyone claiming a result. Too often the FSA attitude seems to be, like those on Wall Street before the arrival of New York State attorney general Elliott Spitzer and his subpoenas,

☛ *See over...*

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not to do anything that those it is supposed to regulate will not like.

The FSA badly needs to get its act together and follow the US example. Instead of a "light touch", it is time to kick ass. And failing some high profile hedge fund traders or bankers, the sub-prime market could be as good a place to start as any.

CASH FOR HONOURS

Labour's loans lost

THE collapse of the "cash-for-honours" investigation leaves unanswered the question of what, if anything, is to be done about the clearly false Labour party accounts for 2004 which did not disclose six of the eight multi-million pound secret loans from would-be peers.

The issue of whether these were "commercial" loans is irrelevant to the issue of whether the accounts were false or misleading. The police appear to have accepted that the loans were commercial, despite the friendly terms.

The party accounts were signed off in June 2005 by then party treasurer Matt Carter and auditors Horwarth Clark Whitehill. It has since emerged that the auditors were not informed of the loans at the time they certified the party accounts. Given Labour's virtual insolvency there can be no question as to the "materiality" of those secret loans. So non-disclosure would seem to be a "slam dunk" breach of the Political Parties, Elections & Referendums Act. Carter was responsible for the accounts but answered to the then Dear Leader who has admitted being aware of the loans.

Both Electoral Commission and accountancy guidelines suggest the loans should have been disclosed as a material, post-balance sheet event – the loans were made after the December 2004 year-end but before the accounts were signed. Current party treasurer Peter Watt has insisted the guidelines were met. Scotland Yard was seemingly briefly interested in this issue until gambling everything on proving the well-nigh unprovable (to the criminal test of beyond reasonable doubt) – that there were agreements to make loans for peerages. The question now is whether the Electoral Commission and the Crown Prosecution Service will decide to salvage something from the wreckage.

PLANET FOOTBALL

Leeds United

THE key unanswered question behind events at Leeds United is why should its biggest offshore creditor, Astor Investment Holdings (owed £17.6m), be prepared to waive that debt but only so long as Leeds chairman Ken Bates was able to buy back the failed club?

Astor appointed administrators KPMG who believed everything they were told and accepted that Astor and its five discretionary trusts had nothing to do with Bates. So that must be right. But who not only writes off almost £18m but then volunteers to help fund the second Bates coming? Not a commercial lender. And Bates has few of those since events at Chelsea, which might have sunk under its burden of debt but for the arrival of Roman Abramovich.

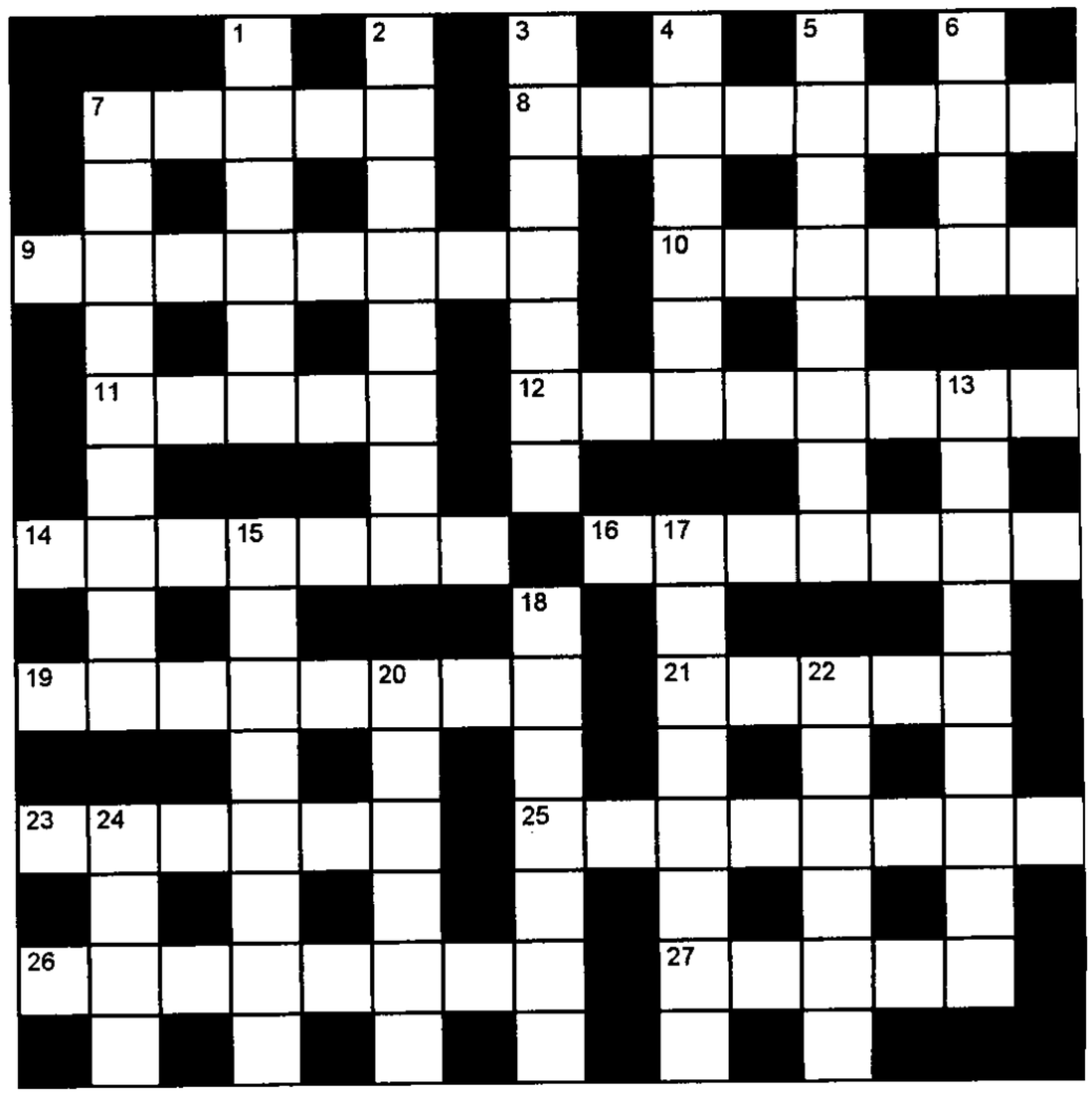
Bates pocketed £17.5m from the sale of his Chelsea shares held in a British Virgin Island company. Five other offshore companies which, like Astor and former offshore creditor Krato Trust, plus the offshore owner of Leeds, Forward Sport Fund, appeared to march in step with him, received a further £8.6m. Again no Bates link was ever proved to the five offshore companies. They just happened to agree with him.

But is it possible that this Chelsea money in some way relates to the funding of Leeds? Could it be that the same interests that benefited from Chelsea re-invested in Leeds? Could it be that these are discretionary family trusts from which Bates personally may not benefit but he knows who does and can somehow influence their continued and remarkable generosity? That would certainly explain a lot. But it can't be true, can it, because Bates says he has no link to the trusts.

'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 345

by Cyclops



£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 10 August 2007

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ACROSS

7 Top half of mouthy inmate of Celebrity Big Brother (God, this country!) (5)

8 So, bursting to show one's protruding organ? (8)

9/12/27 Alex & co's North South coalition that's pisspoor do (8,8,5)

10 Place down under, in another place down under, foreign article and end of tube? (6)

11 Come from basement (5)

12 See 9ac.

14 In case woman, taken short, is piddling (7)

16 College hospital nursing arse – Cyclops's (7)

19 He's at it again, the love rat! (3-5)

21 Our incumbent no longer against one getting buggy (5)

23 Ex-President Bill's back, right next to Brenda (6)

25 Regulator reveals two-thirds of the Balls ELT broadcast (8)

26 A torrid time with Fry about to flip (8)

27 See 9ac.

DOWN

1 Hawking would reject this total placed inside (6)

2 Indications of office sin, screwing around, gin swilling and editor getting end away (8)

3 *Sun*: "Rich abused kids!" (7)

4 Instrument bottle covering top of todger (6)

5 Call off row on date – it's a trendy thing (4,4)

6 An arsehole during the elections (4)

7 Minister's device for easing an erection with rising growths (4,5)

13/24 Old Navy Dept. chief's capital erection (9,4)

15 Stupid, very, to twice support Cameron's lot (4,4)

17 Concealments of balls snatched by Bristol supporters? (5-3)

18 Arthur exploded about "end of strike" piss-taker (7)

20 Like the bog awful army keeping quiet ... (6)

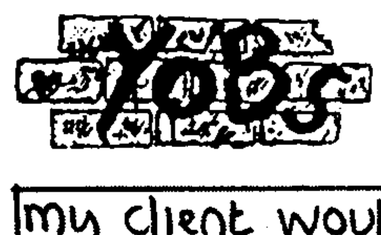
22 ... about rises in badly-cast provisions (6)

24 See 13dn.

Crossword 344 winner: PETER EVANS

ACROSS: 1 Economy 5 Upswell 10 Leadership 11/21 Dead duck 12 Screen 13 Tail wind 14 Snow 16 Chocaholic 18 Homophobia 22 Placenta 24 Sprogs 26 Emma 27 Banana skin 28 On stage 29 Sex shop.

DOWN: 2 Crescendo 3 Nudge 4 Moronic 6 Paprika 7 Widowhood 8 Learn 9 Shit-for-brains 15 Woodcraft 17 Incognito 19 Handbag 20 Absence 23 Lemon 25 Risks.



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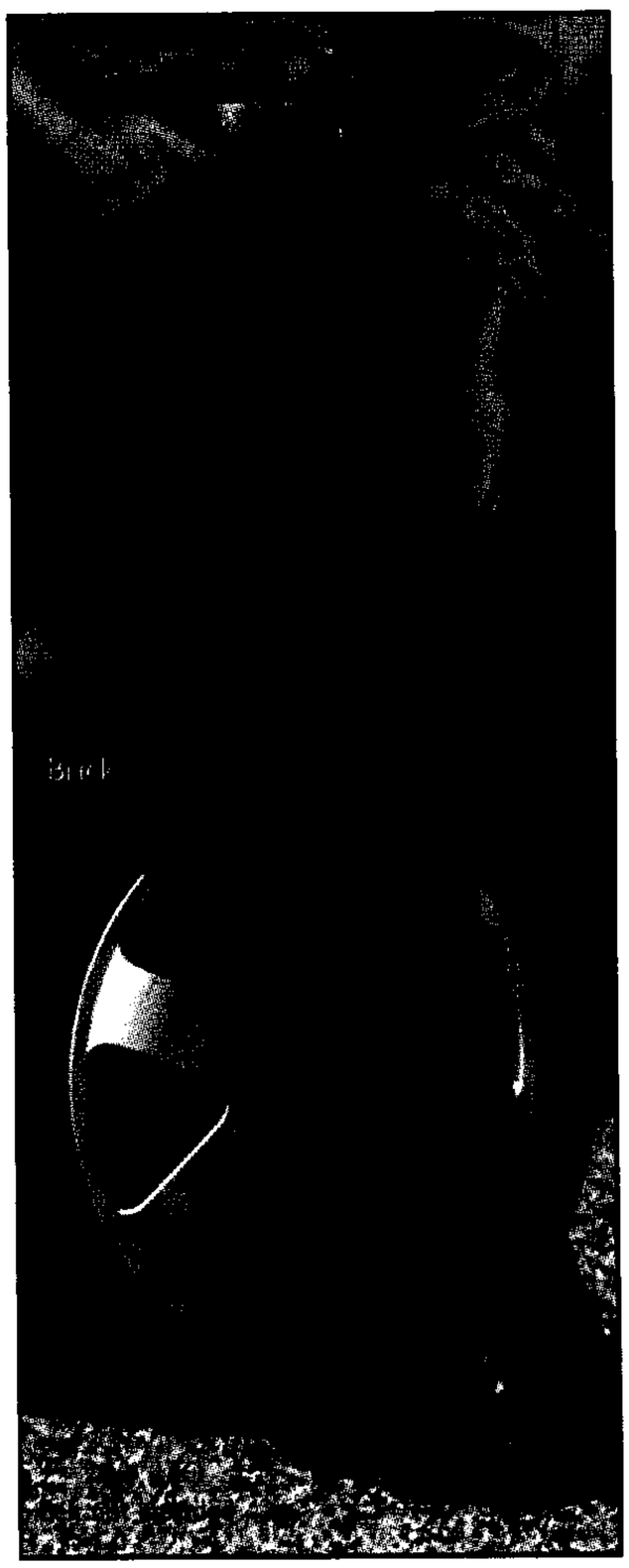

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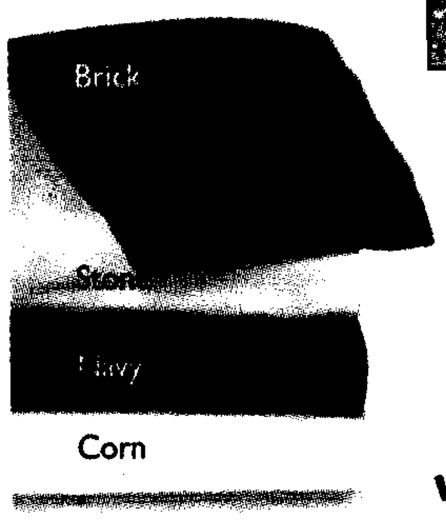

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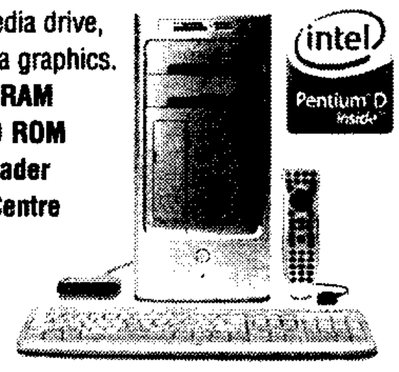

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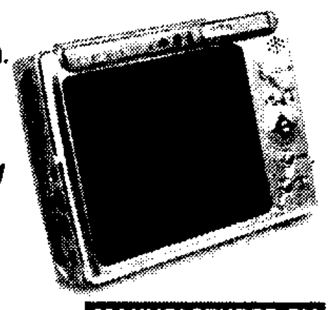

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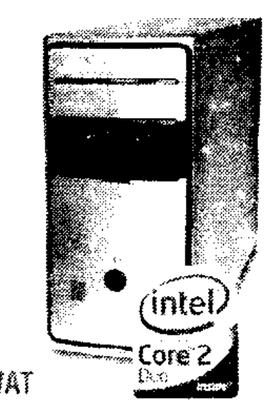

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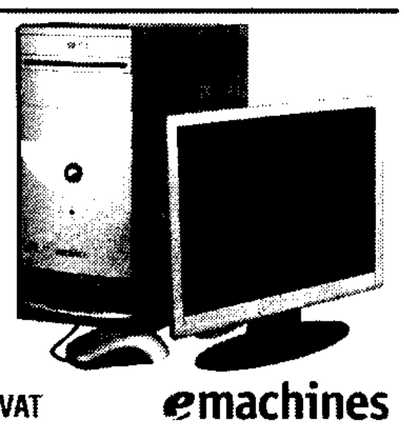

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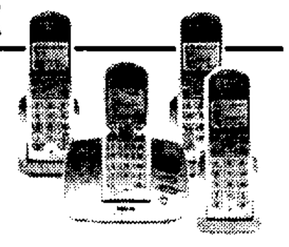

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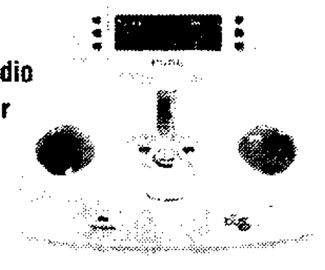

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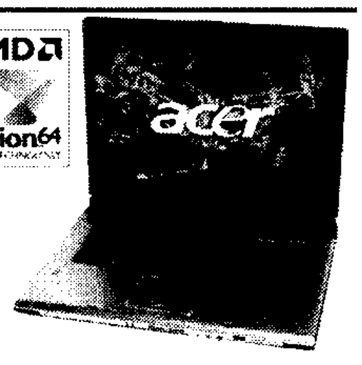

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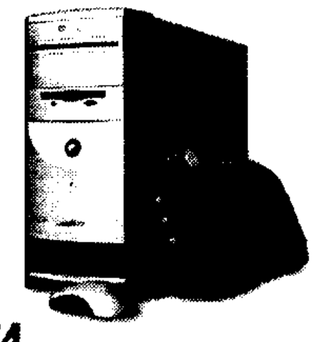

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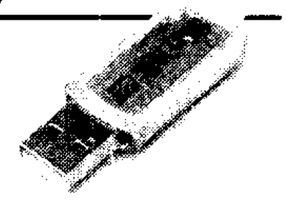

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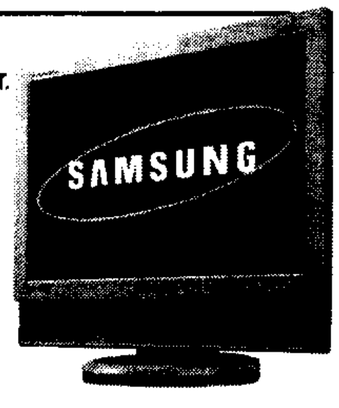

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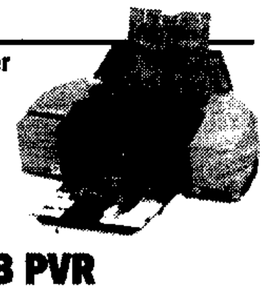

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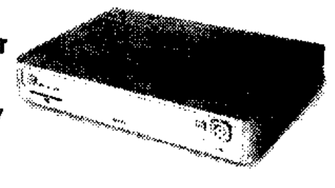

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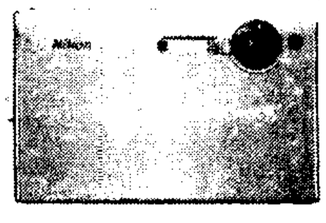

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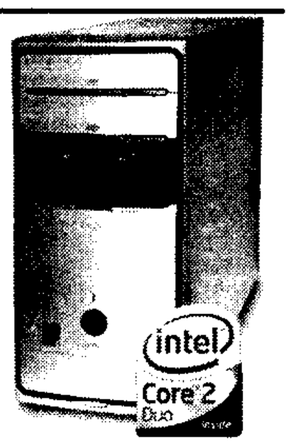

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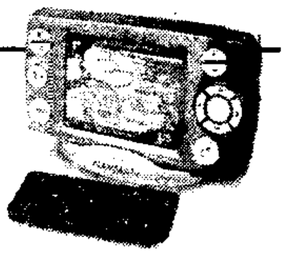

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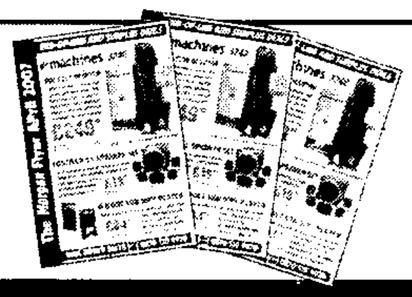

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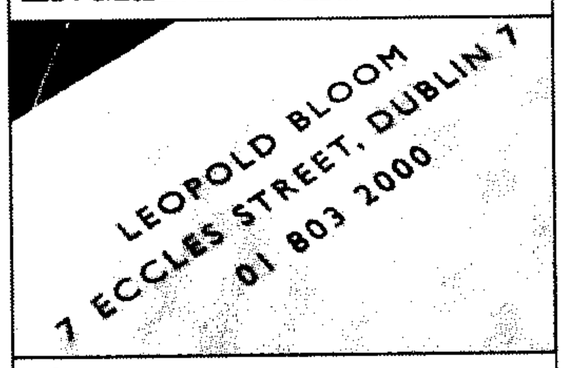

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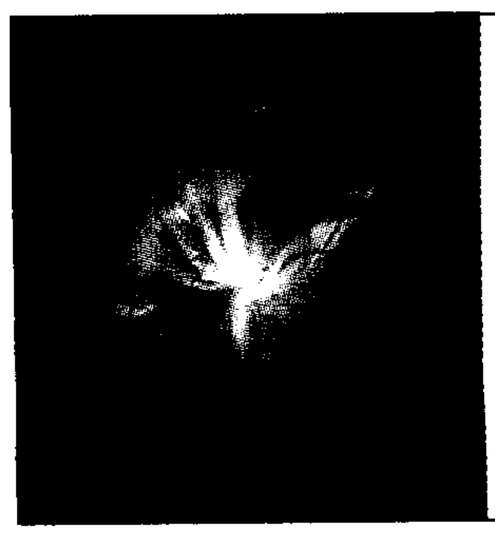

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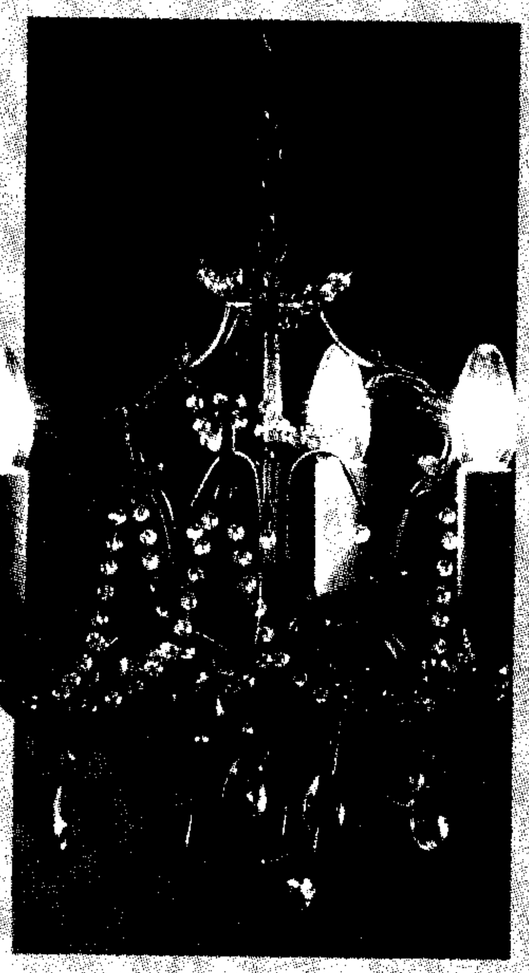

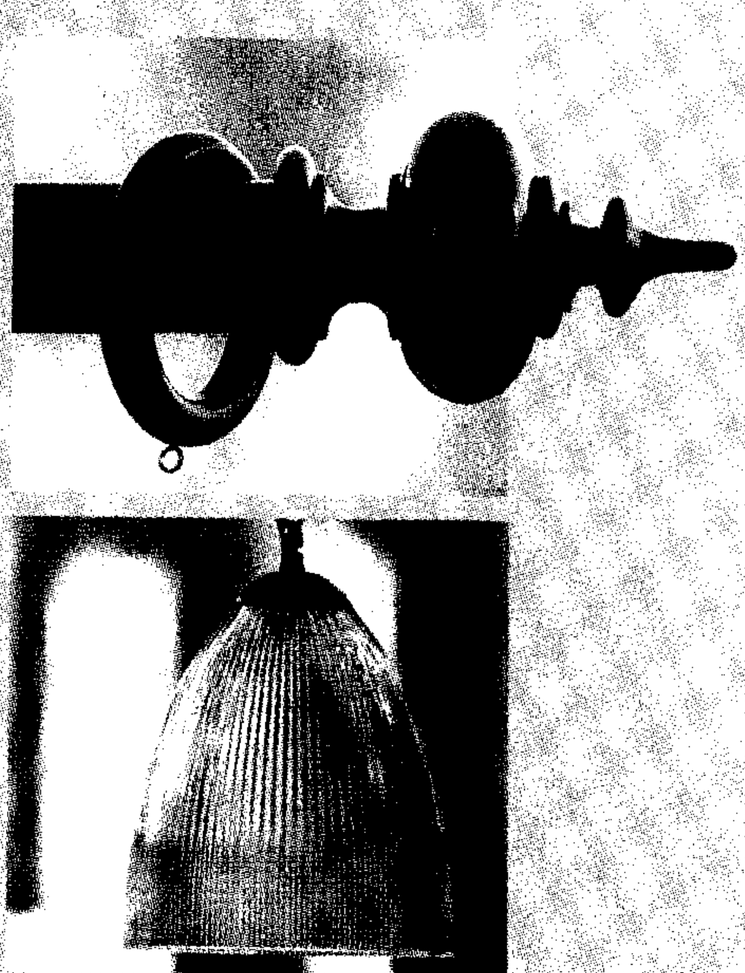
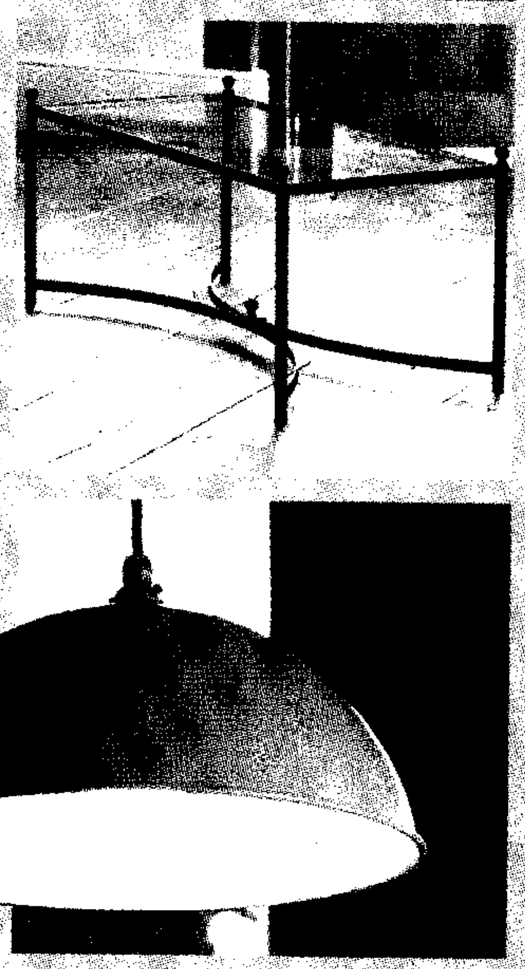

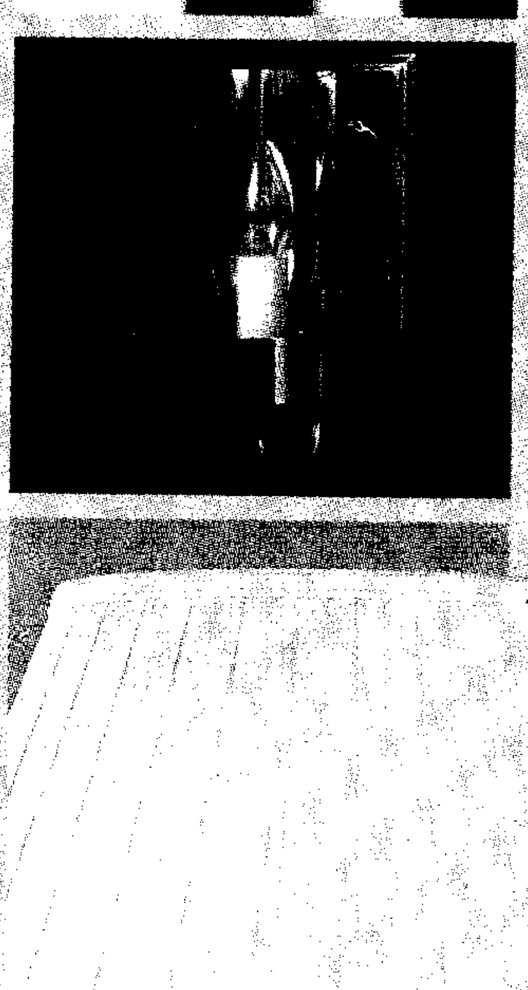
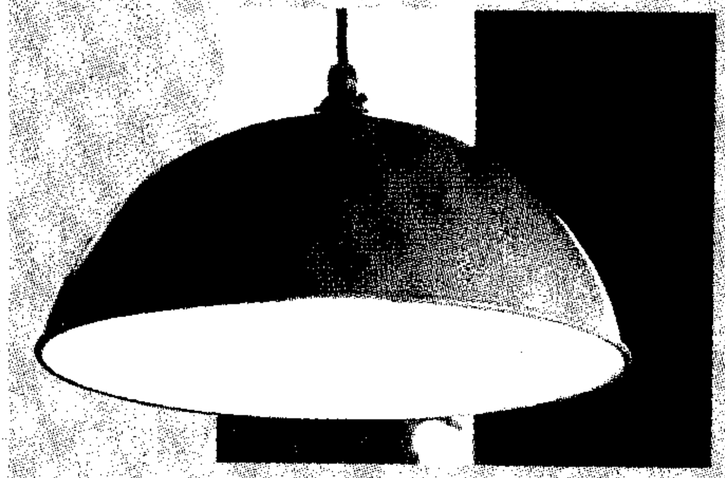

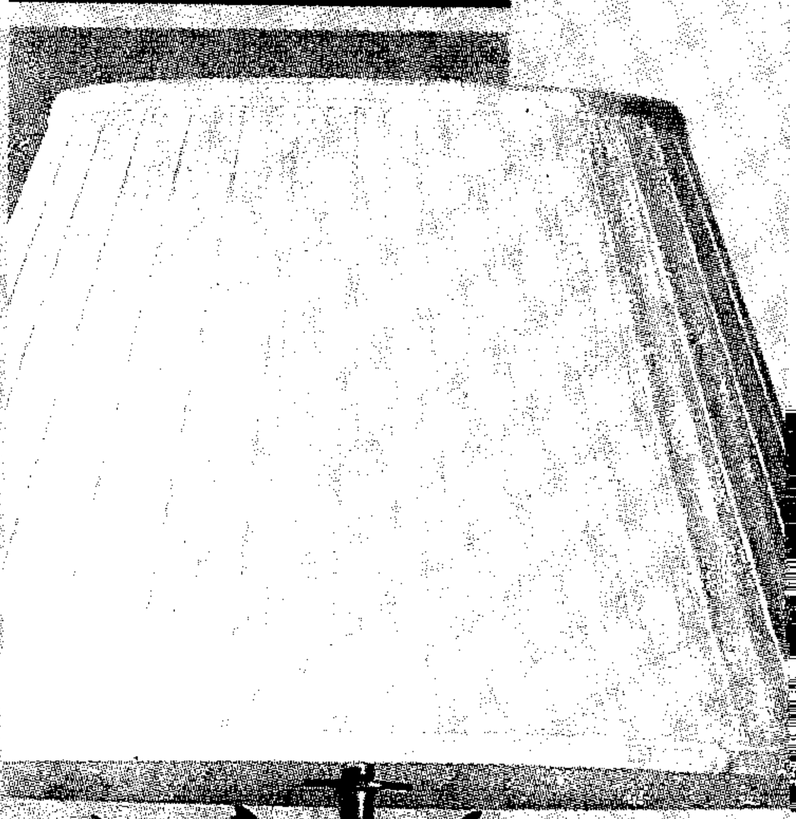

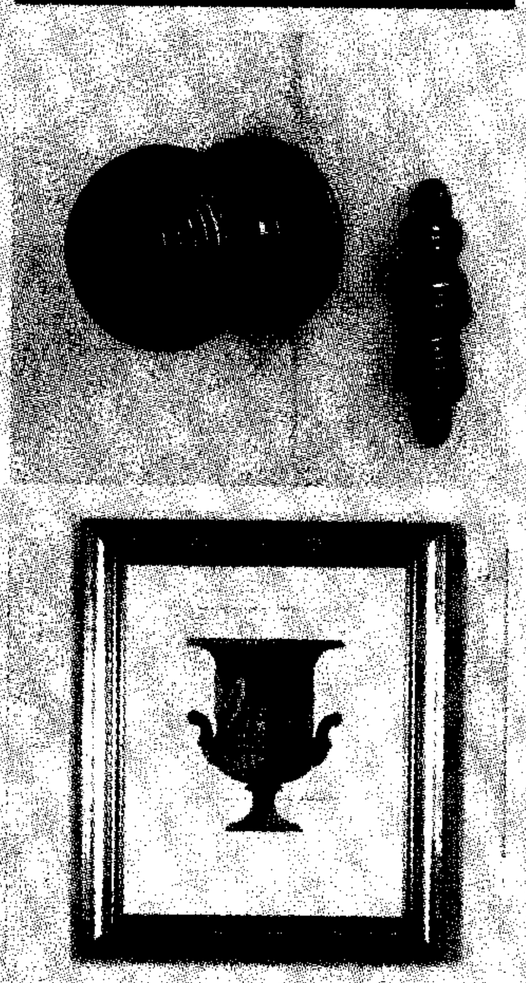
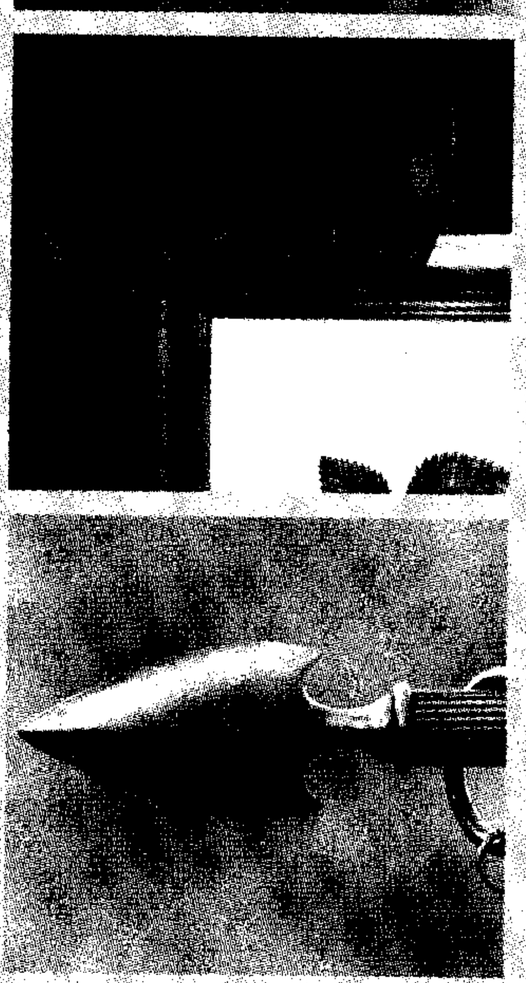
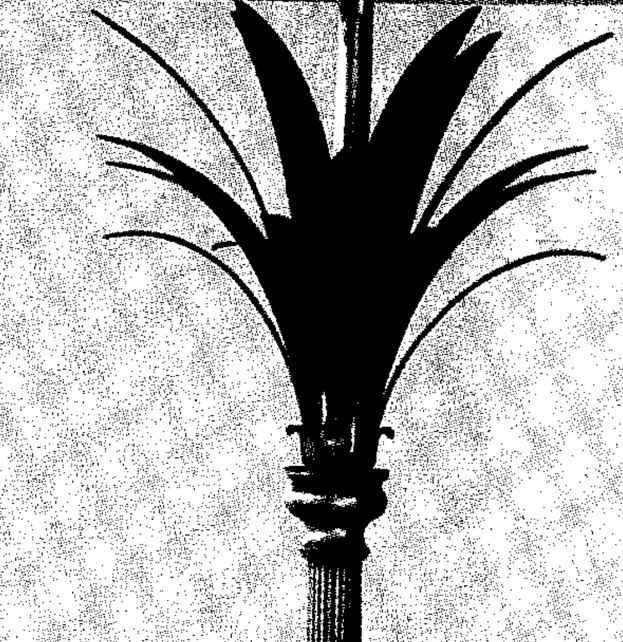

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